CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

No.9 OCTOBER 1984

85p

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Cover by Oliver Frey

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

ISSUE 9 OCTOBER 1984

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UPSETTING EXPLETIVES

We have received several letters from readers complaining about naughty words in CRASH No 7 (August), which appeared in my Editorial pages and in the news item about the collapse of Imagine Software. Quite a few of the correspondents linked the appearance of these words with falling standards in computer journalism. It seems to me to be an entirely irrelevant argument. Standards in any form of journalism are to do with accuracy, interest and, above all, honesty of expression – not with the occasional use of an expletive. I'm well aware of the moral that using swear words is a failing of proper expression and generally applaud the sentiment, but I think society at large is today capable of accepting that at selected times a simple word can express a range and strength of personal feeling that a well constructed paragraph cannot. If the pages of CRASH were filled with expletives in the profusion to be found in colour supplement magazines, then I would accept that our standards were slipping. The editorial piece about Imagine was written from an impassioned point of view, and as such I regarded the use of the word bull**** censored for fear of further upset!) as appropriate. I'm sorry if it offended readers, but I do not apologise for using it in the context.

In the case of the news piece on Imagine, the expletive was used by Bruce Everiss over the telephone in conversation with our reporter, and its repitition in the article is entirely justified as reportage. CRASH does not swear lightly or conveniently. If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Everiss used precisely the same sentence when speaking later the same day to a reporter from *Popular Computing Weekly*, and they too reported his words verbatim.

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Plans are well under way for a **CRASH CHRISTMAS SPECIAL** edition this year. This will be a bumper bundle (as they say) of competitions and articles. There will also be a giant free double-sided poster, which also acts as a calendar for 1985, included in every copy. Because of the amount of work and material going into it, it will cost a bit more than the usual CRASH (although subscribers will receive it as part of their normal subscription). It should prove good value, however, due to the large number of interesting competitions we are arranging together with many software and hardware houses, which will mean prizes for hundreds and hundreds of lucky winners. Out on sale on the 13th of December, price £1.25, the Christmas Special is in practice the January issue of CRASH – but we promise you, it will be a very different and special edition.

EL CHEAPO

I've gone on quite a bit about the price of software in past issues, and in the last one I mentioned that CRASH would be behind any software house that could produce really good programs at a cheap price. Now I have seen three games from **Atlantis Software** that I really do think are worth the asking price and that haven't been written down to match the price. All three are reviewed in this issue.

In the main, however, I still remain to be convinced that really innovative games can be properly developed and marketed at such low prices. The argument that illegal tape copying would lessen if all the games were sold at £1.99 seems sadly unfounded, judging by the response to date of our piracy questionnaire. The problem remains. . .

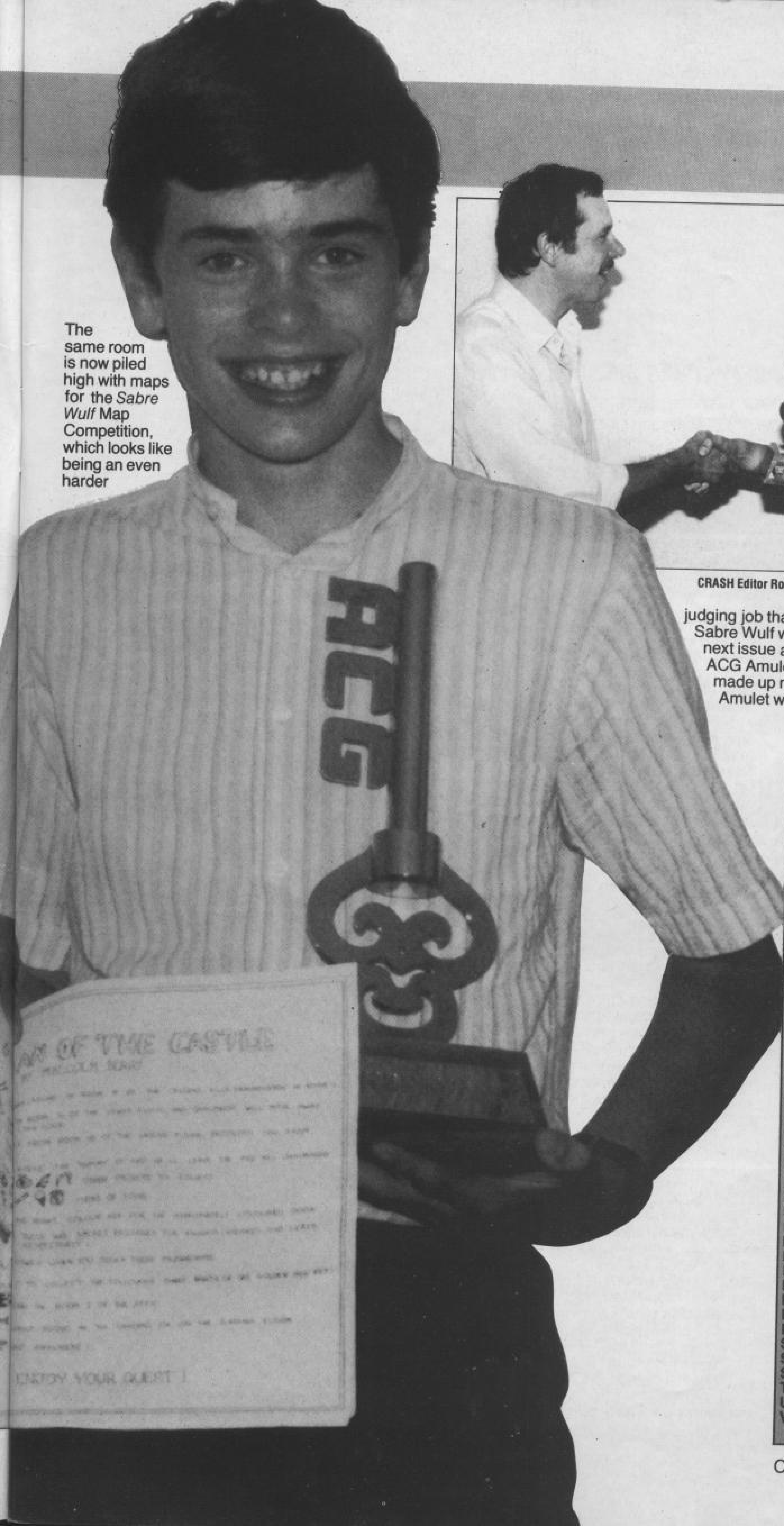
ATIC ATAC MAP WINNER

ACG Key winner, Malcolm Berry (14) from Rayleigh in Essex, travelled up to Ludlow together with his mother, father and sister, to receive his trophy for winning the Ultimate Atic Atac Map Competition. The Berry family were invited to lunch with CRASH Editor Roger Kean and Art Editor Oliver Frey before the presentation was made. Malcolm's mother told us that he's always drawing and designing things. The striking version of *Atic Atac's* cover had apparently been done long before the competition was even thought of and Malcolm thought it would come in handy for the Map.

After lunch Roger Kean presented Malcolm with the **ACG Key** trophy in the very room where the competition judging had taken place some weeks earlier.



Proud owner of the Golden Key of ACG, Malcolm Berry holds up the trophy and his winning entry.



The same room is now piled high with maps for the *Sabre Wulf* Map Competition, which looks like being an even harder



CRASH Editor Roger Kean congratulates Malcolm on his win.

judging job than that for Atic Atac! The Sabre Wulf winners will be announced in the next issue and will receive a trophy of the ACG Amulet, which Ultimate is having made up now. Like the ACG key, the Amulet will be completely unique.

ADVERTISERS INDEX

ONE CHR$ INKEY$

JASON WEST lives in Orpington, Kent, and has been a CRASH reader for some time. He has strong opinions about computer magazines in general and computer journalism, and was probably the reader most upset by the CRASH/PCG war of words.

REVOLUTION!

There you sit with your 'game and watch', wondering what to do next. Suddenly you dad bursts into the room with a new Spectrum. 'Wow,' you think, and set it all up. Ah, now what? Thrown into disarray you decide to do the first important thing – get a computer magazine. Off you go to the newsagents, open the door and BANG! Multitudes of sparkling, glossy magazines wait to drag you into their world. Behind the thousands of magazines you manage to catch a glimpse of a daily newspaper.

Such is the banality of computer journalism today. It isn't new anymore; bring out a magazine thick and glossy enough to outshine the other shelf-inhabitants and it's a sure-fire hit. Another way of attracting potential buyers is to emblazon half the contents of the magazine across the front of it – and don't forget the exclusive reviews and competitions.

Flicking through the prehistoric magazines of 1981 (yes, dinosaurs were just nearing extinction then) the conservatism in them is amazing. For instance, the letters page is full of letters which read as though they were written by university students studying 'Emotional and Physical Psychology as told by Dr. Arbuthnott'! No sarcastic comments or (heaven forbid) funny letters. Letters instead with such headings as 'Erroneous Factorials' and 'Portmaneau Word' – don't look at me, I'm just as confused.



JASON WEST and a collection of glossy computer mags. Is gloss selling poor journalism?

Things began to pick up with the arrival of the Genie from Lowe Electronics and the ZX81. But, later on came the games! An adventure for the ZX81 would set you back £14! Thank God the Spectrum wasn't around then! Most home computer magazines today carry the weight of about ten or more software reviews. Not so earlier on in the revolution! One software review appeared in a magazine of December 1981. The software in question was for the Commodore PET and cost £400 – and you lot complain about the price of *Sabre Wulf*!

As time went on there were more adverts and by the time the Spectrum arrived software houses began to establish themselves with a sudden influx of money to fund one or two glossy adverts in an equally glossy magazine.

So we arrive at the present day and find that magazines become thicker, the adverts glossier and larger and the editorials longer and seemingly subtler. But already slanging matches between magazines in the main running have begun. Editors calling each other's magazines names and even beginning to swear in their editorials. When it is necessary for an editor to swear to make his point known, then it is time for him to give up journalism. I am not offended by swearing at all – but in a computer magazine? It is more effective for a journalist to twist his words rather than using twisted words.

What does the future hold for computer journalism? Who knows? Three or four years ago there were about five or six computer magazines for sale. Today there are about twenty to twenty-five. Will the fledgling industry be crushed by its own development? For our sakes, let's hope not!

ROGER KEAN replies: *'I've already covered the point about the swearing earlier, but I must confess to being puzzled about Jason's logic about swear words appearing in computer magazines – he says he's not offended by swearing* **AT ALL.** *Again, one might refrain from swearing in a church because of the context, but are computer magazines to be compared with churches? What's so special about computer magazines and the writing contained in them that so sets them apart from other written material? It's a neat aphorism to talk about twisting words rather than using twisted words, but to my mind one of the biggest failings of any form of journalism is the way in which words are constantly twisted to imply a different meaning to the one supplied originally.'*

INDEX TO REVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE

Peripheral perfection



No more fumbling with the game control keys, now you can have joystick control on the ZX Spectrum. The Kempston joystick interface allows all joysticks in the Kempston range (and others that are Atari compatible) to be used with the Spectrum. Simply plugs into the edge connector. No modifications necessary. **ONLY £11.50**



Compatible with ZX Interface 1 the Pro-Interface has three 9-way D Sockets. Two of the sockets allow compatibility with Sinclair/Psion software whilst the third offers the dual facility of both Kempston joystick software and cursor key software. The Pro-Interface also features a cartridge slot for ROM based software. **ONLY £19.95**



Maximum arcade quality features at a reasonable price. Features: □ Top fire button for one handed thumb control □ Trigger button for one handed index finger control □ Base fire bar for left or right handed control □ 8-way arcade quality leaf switches □ Rubber return action □ 1.5 metre cable. Commodore and Atari compatible. See joystick interface for Spectrum compatibility. **ONLY £12.75**



At last an RS 232 interface for the ZX Spectrum allowing connection to any printer which follows the RS 232 protocol. The interface has its own EPROM allowing the use of keywords LLIST, LPRINT and COPY. We recommend the Brother EP44 Printer for use with this interface. Interface complete with cable and connector **ONLY £45.00**



The ultimate joystick for the home computer. Features: □ Ergonomic design and nylon covered steel shaft □ 8-way arcade quality leaf switches □ Dual fire buttons for left or right handed play □ Rubber return action for smoothness □ 1.5 metre cable.
Commodore and Atari compatible. See joystick interface for Spectrum compatibility. **ONLY £13.50**



The Kempston centronics interface will allow you to utilise a vast range of printers with an industry standard centronics input port on the ZX Spectrum. **Interface E** has all operating commands held in an EPROM, so plug in and its ready to use. **ONLY £49.99** **Interface S** offering similar features as above but software routines are provided separately to initialise the interface before use. **ONLY £35.00**

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Trade Enquiries Welcome

A Crash Smash

W·A·N·T·E·D: M

WANTED: MONTY MOLE

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Peter Harrap**

The inlay says that this game has caused quite a stir with games experts, the national press and television. Television was naturally interested because the game contains a caricature of Arthur Scargill, the Miners' Union leader. In fact a sequence was shown on TV News at the height of the strike. It's been released simultaneously for the Spectrum and the Commodore 64, but revierwers in the CRASH office feel that, with all the Commodore's better looking graphics, the Spectrum version is the better game of the two.

The story goes that it's a long, chilling winter, and Monty Mole makes a daring bid to raid his local South Yorkshire pit to snatch coal. Battling through flying pickets, man-eating fish, coal crushers and drills, he escapes to emerge in Arthur's Castle. Seizing his only chance of toppling the great man, Monty collects the secret ballot papers and vote casting scroll. But Arthur's no fool when it comes to the heavy stuff and his personal bodyguards put up a struggle.

So much for the blurb – what about the game? Instant viewing will bring *Manic Miner/Jet Set Willy* to mind, and not without some justification, for *Wanted: Monty Mole* is a complex platform game with a jumping character and interlinked rooms to the maze. There are also a few guessing tricks involved and a strategic element to finding the route through a room or series of rooms. Monty himself is an endearing character likely to reappear in more games, who has an attractive walking gait and an athletic jump very reminiscent of his mining cousin from Surbiton.

Unlike *Manic Miner,* which ends on the surface, Monty starts on the top in a screen with a bridge over troubled waters, squirrels dropping acorns and a steaming bucket. The bucket looks tempting – it should be, for without it coal won't even appear in the mine shafts to be collected. First timers, take heed – grab the bucket and run like hell! The mine shafts contain ropes, moving platforms and dice-with-death crushers as well as ghosts, monsters and deadly machines. There are also objects to be collected but only the coal lumps score points. The objects do, however, have their uses, and it will no doubt be the cause of much speculation and playing hints inissues to come, as to what does what. One thing is certain, some useful objects cannot be collected until a particular tool on the screen has been collected first. In all there are 21 rooms, or levels, to get through.

CRITICISM

● 'In my view *Monty Mole* will be a future Spectrum hero and there will be posters of him adorning every wall in Britain. After hearing about this game on the News, I thought it would be a winner, and when it arrived I found I was right. If you liked *Manic Miner* (is there anyone who doesn't?) you will love *Monty Mole* because it's a classic platform game, more complicated and, in my opinion, better than *Manic Miner.* The graphics are certainly up to MM standards and with no serious attribute problems. As to the sound – well the Spectrum's never been up to much on sound, so don't expect too much! I found this game fun to play and certainly addictive – this has got to be one of the best games for the Spectrum this year and definitely worth buying.'

● 'Monty Mole *is a fantastic* Jet Set Willy *type of game with excellent graphics and a good use of colour throughout. I liked Monty because he is well detailed and animated, as are the flying pickets, hair sprays,*

Monty, pursued by a picket, enters Arthur's mine



M·O·N·T·Y M·O·L·E



Deeper into the mine – it's hard to know where to go

debris and so on. It is very addictive, and I will be coming back again and again. The only thing is that a bit of continuous sound wouldn't hurt.'

● 'This program carries on where *Manic Miner* left off on a similar platform basis, again in the mining industry. As the game progresses, the dangers increase dramatically. Monty is very well animated, and moves about with ease from the well positioned control keys. Well into the game the elusive Arthur Scargill appears with a big head and a huge conk. Overall I got completely immersed in this well thought out and highly addictive game, which I think will provide many hours of fun.'

● *'One of the major distinctions between Monty and Willy, is that Monty requires a deal of luck in certain situations, like the crushers. While this might be thought to reduce the playing skill element, it does add one of sheer thrill and nerves. The graphics, design and animation of all the moving characters is excellent, amusing and attractive, and that adds quite a bit to the playability of the game. Whether* Monty Mole *is better than* Manic Miner *willhave to remain a question of the near future, and more hours playing. I suspect it might be better by a touch; better than* Jet Set Willy? *I don't know that either, pretty much as good though.'*



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, B to SPACE = jump
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair ZX 2
Keyboard play: very responsive, good positions
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: very good, sensible scale
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives:
Screens: 21
General rating: highly addictive, excellent value.

Use of computer	86%
Graphics	94%
Playability	95%
Getting started	88%
Addictive qualities	96%
Value for money	90%
Overall	**92%**

If you think that dragons, wizards and warlords are dangerous, test your skill and daring against pirates, Indians and wild beasts . . .



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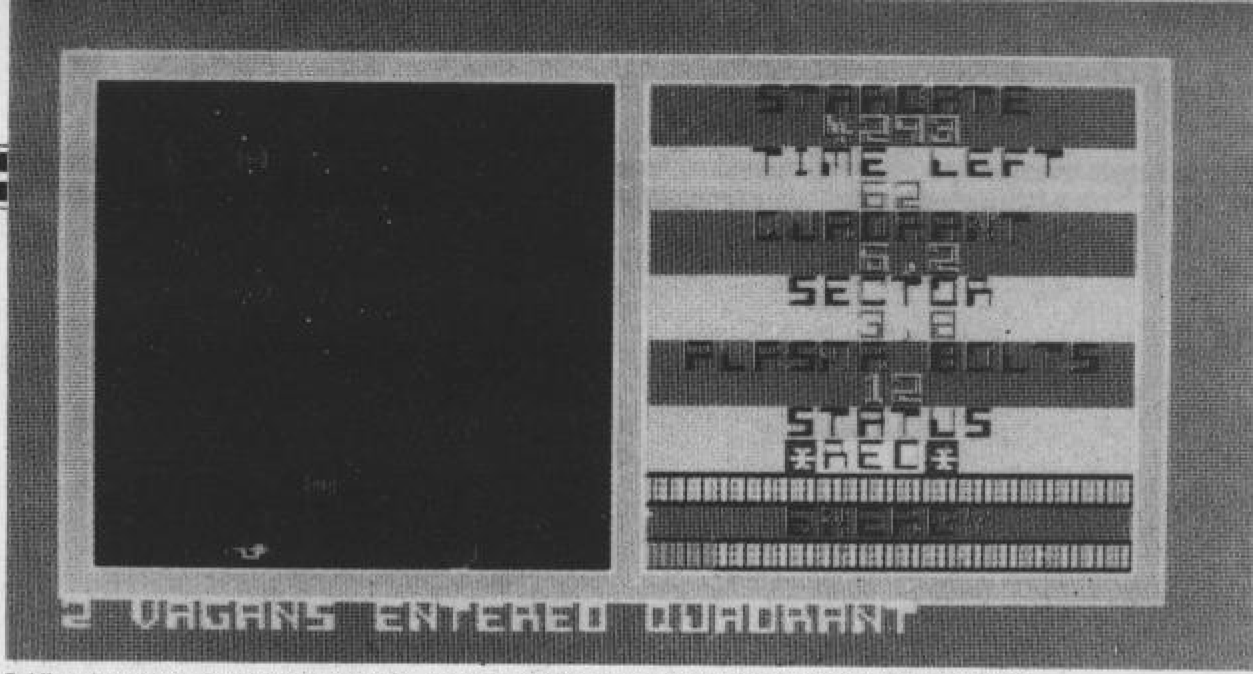
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Boldly going where others have gone before – but doing it better. The elegant playing screen from Vagan Attack.

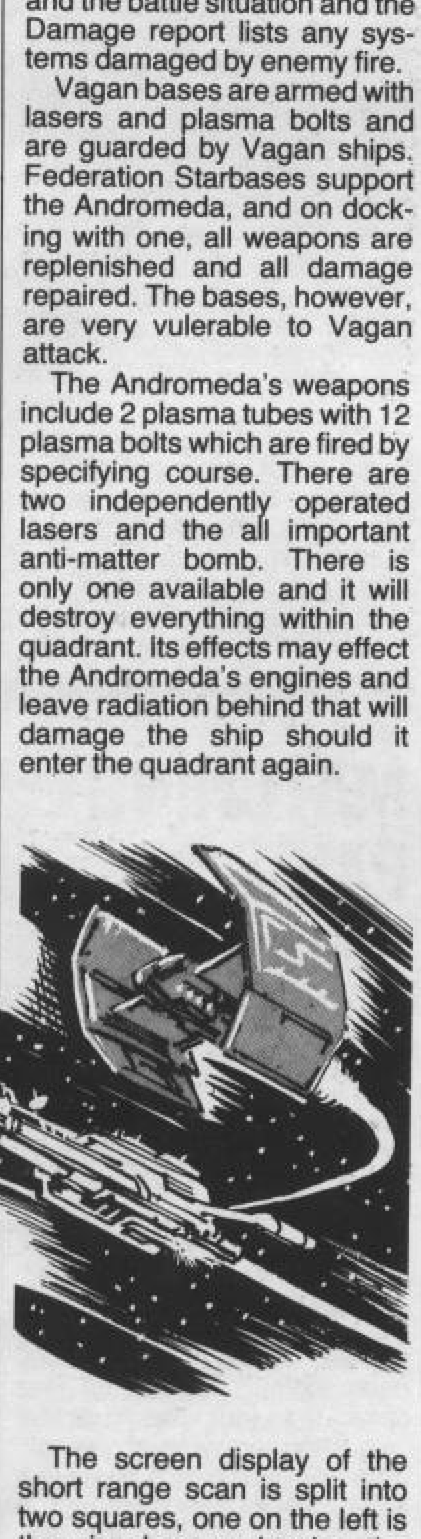
VAGAN ATTACK

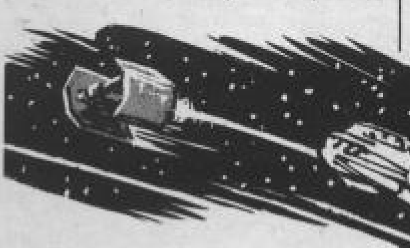
Producer: **Atlantis Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **John Green**

'Star Trek' style games enjoyed great popularity on the ZX81 and there have been some versions for the Spectrum of varying success. What distinguishes *Vagan Attack* from the others is that it's a very good game and unlike most earlier versions, which were expensive, this one is at a budget price. Despite the title and the alteration of some fave names like Klingons, *Vagan Attack* is a classic Trekkie with the advantage of high speed action.

The scenario goes boldly where others have gone before – the Federation has been caught by a surprise Vagan attack. Only you and your ship Andromeda stand in the way of Vagan domination of the galaxy. You must destroy all the Vagan ships and bases within a limited period of time.

The galaxy is divided into 64 Quadrants, each of which is divided into 64 sectors. Sectors and quadrants are represented in the classic notational form, blocks being numbered 1 to 8 across the top and





down the sides. There are three visual scans available to the commander of the Andromeda, the Galaxy Chart, which shows all 64 quadrants, quadrants where the Andromeda has already been and whether there are any Vagan ships or starbases in those quadrants. It also indicates how many stars, Federation and Vagan starbases and Vagan ships there are in each of the quadrants. Most of the action part of the game is played on the Short Range Scanner which gives a detailed view of the quadrant occupied by the Andromeda. Additionally the Status report gives information about your ship and the battle situation and the Damage report lists any systems damaged by enemy fire.

Vagan bases are armed with lasers and plasma bolts and are guarded by Vagan ships. Federation Starbases support the Andromeda, and on docking with one, all weapons are replenished and all damage repaired. The bases, however, are very vulerable to Vagan attack.

The Andromeda's weapons include 2 plasma tubes with 12 plasma bolts which are fired by specifying course. There are two independently operated lasers and the all important anti-matter bomb. There is only one available and it will destroy everything within the quadrant. Its effects may effect the Andromeda's engines and leave radiation behind that will damage the ship should it enter the quadrant again.

The screen display of the short range scan is split into two squares, one on the left is the visual scan showing the position of the Andromeda (a curiously familiar shape), that of stars and Vagan bases, ships or starbases. Firing actions can be viewed on the screen both from the Andromeda and from the enemy. As Commander, you have various command functions available at a keypress. These are listed under Control Keys in the Comments section.

CRITICISM

● 'After *Code Name Mat* no 'Star Trek' type games have been produced. This game hangs on to the strategy side of 'Star Trek' but in a more fun sort of way. Graphics responses are excellent being fast, colourful and, text-wise, pleasing. Overall, I think this is the best 'traditional' type of 'Star Trek' game I have seen.'

● '*Vagan Attack has shades of* Code Name Mat *in the sense of a space arcade/strategy. It is exceptional value for £1.99 considering its complexity. The screen layout is very easy to follow Even though the graphics don't move much, they seem to work in this game. It's very playable and a sure winner, one of the best trekking games for the Spectrum and at a cheap price.*'

● 'A great deal of detail has gone into this 'Trekkie' game, especially on the graphics side. The specially generated screen text is very neat and the way it is laid out is easy to follow in what are generally rather complex games. Life isn't exactly easy on level one and there are 9 to play; levels affect the numbers of enemy and the amount of time you have to save their galaxy from vagrant Vagans. Very often in Trekkie games, this isn't possible, and the Commander must sit and wait for an opportunity to break in to enter a fire command. This real time aspect makes the arcadish sequences much more fun than usual. It's amazing that a game of this quality and complexity should be on sale at £1.99, and good luck to Atlantis for bringing it out. I would heartily recommend it to any 'trek' fan as a worthwhile investment.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: numerics for weapon direction in degrees, **10** for Ion drive (localised travel), **TE** = tetron drive (long distance),
LA = lasers,
PL = plasma bolts,
AN = anti-matter bomb,
GA = galaxy map,
ST = status report,
DA = damage report,
LO = long range scan,
SH = short range scan,
AB = abort command
Joystick: none required
Keyboard play: requires practice as fast decisions are needed
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: good, nice text and generally clear graphics
Sound: not much
Skill levels: 9
General rating: tremendous value for 'Trek' fans, generally good value for most players, makes for a good two-players-on-the-same-side game.



Use of computer	65%
Graphics	68%
Playability	73%
Getting started	77%
Addictive qualities	71%
Value for money	83%
Overall	**73%**



B.C. BILL

Producer: **Imagine**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Eric the Bear(?)**

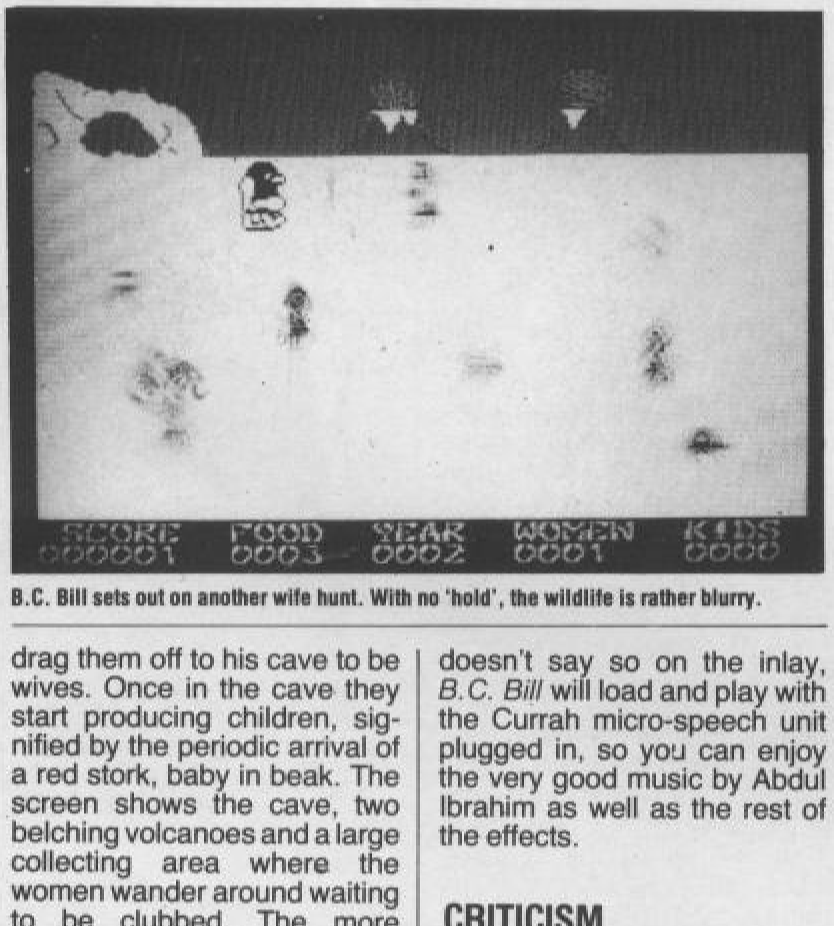
Whether the 'B.C.' before Bill's name means Before Computers or Before Crash is not stated on the inlay, but the game is certainly post-Imagine and is now marketed by Beau Jolly, the London company that secured the rights to market Imagine's games.

B.C. Bill will probably cause some furore or other as it is a game of sexism, sex and violence. The basic object is to club women into a state of insensibility so that Bill can drag them off to his cave to be wives. Once in the cave they start producing children, signified by the periodic arrival of a red stork, baby in beak. The screen shows the cave, two belching volcanoes and a large collecting area where the women wander around waiting to be clubbed. The more women and children there are in the cave, the more food Bill must give them. Fortunately the food also wanders around waiting to be clubbed and dragged off. One problem is the predatory dinosaurs that eat anything they touch, including Bill.

The game is played across seventeen years and the amount of food available depends on the seasons which can be seen changing as you play. A shortage of food may result in some wives dying, in which case the kids will leave home then Bill finally dies of a broken heart.

B.C. Bill comes with a lavish inlay card which also contains a long and absurd account of the life of Eric the Bear, supposed writer of the game but which one may assume is entirely apochryphal. The game idea apparently comes from Mark Butler himself and so he must take any blame which attaches for its chauvinistic attitudes!

Incidentally, although it doesn't say so on the inlay, *B.C. Bill* will load and play with the Currah micro-speech unit plugged in, so you can enjoy the very good music by Abdul Ibrahim as well as the rest of the effects.



B.C. Bill sets out on another wife hunt. With no 'hold', the wildlife is rather blurry.

CRITICISM

● 'After being subjected to Imagine's last two programs I loaded this one with some misgivings – please don't let it be another *Cosmic Cruiser*. My prayers were answered and I was rather pleasantly surprised. *B.C. Bill* is the best thing out of Imagine for a long time (even the last time?) The game is original, has very good quality graphics and it IS PLAYABLE! A thing recent Imagine games have not been.'

● 'B.C. Bill *is full of very good graphics and excellent sound. Clubbing wives and feeding kids can be quite difficult as the game is played over many seasons with less food about in the winter than in the summer. The edible dinosaurs must be clubbed from behind, while the dangerous ones can be killed for points. I think this one's a bit chauvinistic (if it had a girl/boy option like* Ant Attack, *perhaps it might sell better). The detail of Bill is especially good when he uses his club or gets eaten. Very addictive and fun to play. I'll be coming back to this one for more.'*

● '*B.C. Bill* is a rather strange game which has its points. The animation of Bill is very good, when he jumps up into the air to smash his club down, but the other graphic characters are pretty flat and uninteresting. Also, while it may be realistic to raise kids and keep them for seventeen or eighteen years, it's very strenuous in a game! Another touch of fairyland joy is the stock bringing in the babies (well – didn't they)? The graphics of the women leave no doubt as to their gender – enormous black blobs sit heavily on their chests so that they resemble pre-historic versions of Dolly Parton's big sister. There is a good tune and some nice effects, although on occasion it does slow down play. Overall a novel idea that lacks something in playability. However, it may have been the game to save Imagine – too late now – too bad.

COMMENTS

Control keys: alternate botoom row keys for left/right, third row/second row for up/down, top row to club
Joystick: AGF, Protek, Kempston, Fuller, Sinclair
Keyboard play: reasonable responsiveness, but slightly awkward positions
Use of colour: quite good, the type of game precludes too much
Graphics: very good on Bill, less so on others, overall reasonable

MATCHING PAIRS

Producer: **C.C.S.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Language: **basic**

Another from the C.C.S. **Charlie Charlie Sugar** budget range. Basically a memory testing game, *Matching pairs* offers one or two players a grid of 24 squares arranged as a six by four board. In these squares 12 different colours will appear, randomly scattered, each colour repeated. The object is to look closely at the very short 'preview' of the colours and then match up all the squares of matching colours.

After the 'preview' the colours vanish to be replaced by numbers. The player is asked to select a number and the colour of that square appears briefly. You must then enter the number of the square which is also the same colour.

There are five levels of patterns to be matched, each more complex than the last. The players' scores are calculated by pairs matched against the number of tries taken, but too low a score will prevent you entering the next level. C.C.S. say this game is a variation on the well known old favourite, Pelmanism. Never heard of it? Never mind.

CRITICISM

● '*Matching Pairs* is okay but not exactly great fun. It really comes down to a test of memory (or luck)! But you can cheat to if you wish – note, if you type in a SPACE after typing in the match number, the computer will tell you the answer is correct! Generally I found this to be one of those have-a-few-goes-now-but-never again games. It left me in a take it or leave it frame of mind. I left it.'

● *'I think this game may offer the family hours of fun on one of those days when you're fed up with speciality arcade game such as . . . This game is definitely not fun for one player as it does tend to get boring and overwhelming after a bit.'*

Sound: excellent tune, may be amplified via Currah micro-speech
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 5
General rating: mixed feelings from reviewers from average to very good.

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	78%
Playability	77%
Getting started	76%
Addictive qualities	69%
Value for money	**64%**
Overall	**73%**

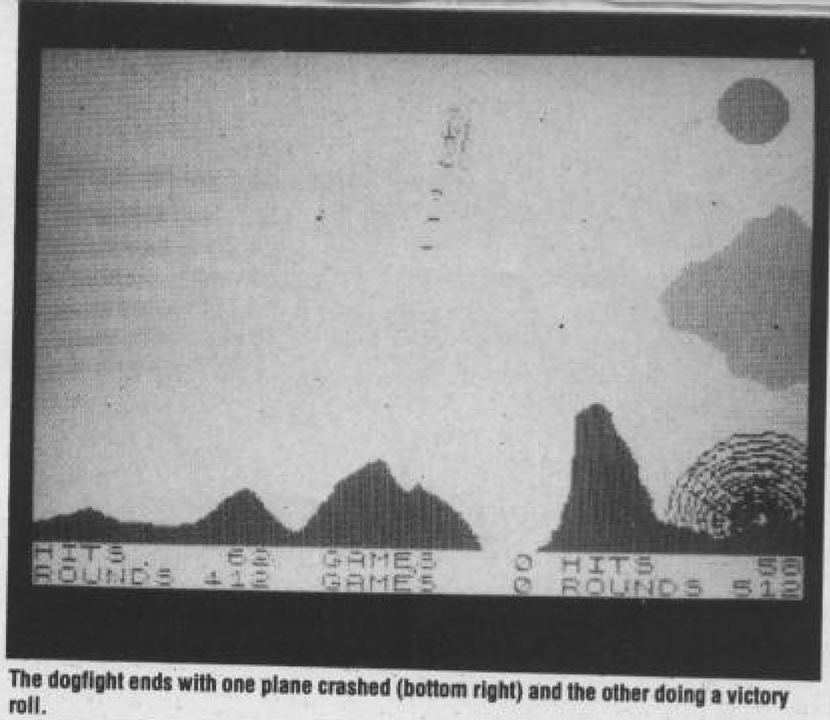
DOGFIGHT

Producer: **Slogger Software**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **A.W. Gilbert**

Dogfight is an aerial combat game for two players, very much along the lines of those on the Atari VCS 'Combat' cartridge. It allows a deal of flexibility for the players in skill level selection. There are eight to chose from which affect conditions such as whether there is ground to fly over or not, size of combat area, aircraft speed, bullet hit area allowable and number of hits required to kill. Your aircraft are World War I bi-planes and you are given 512 rounds of ammunition.

Level selection is elegantly achieved by a large grid offering the eight skill levels across, while vertically an axis contains the various ingredients. With this method it's possible to select the type of conditions you want for play. Selecting ground conditions means that the base of the screen has some very hilly terrain with a valley. By navigating accurately it is possible to fly your aircraft vertically down through the narrow gap to escape, reappearing at the top of the screen. This manoeuvre can be used to surprise your opponent.

Other features on screen include a large moving cloud which periodically hurls out bolts of lightning that can destroy a plane if it's hit, and whirling propeller blades. Aircraft running out of time will start to belch smoke.



The dogfight ends with one plane crashed (bottom right) and the other doing a victory roll.

CRITICISM

● 'I haven't seen this type of game for a long time – arcades of time in fact. It does tend to be fairly enjoyable for two players but really doesn't have any lasting appeal. Quite a few changes can be made to this game if you feel that way inclined. Speed is one of the major changes. The graphics are smooth, but a little flashy, or should I say, flickery. Colour and sound has been used fairly. Cloud movement is quite a novel idea for this type of game. Overall, quite playable if you are in two, not over-addictive but it is over-priced.'



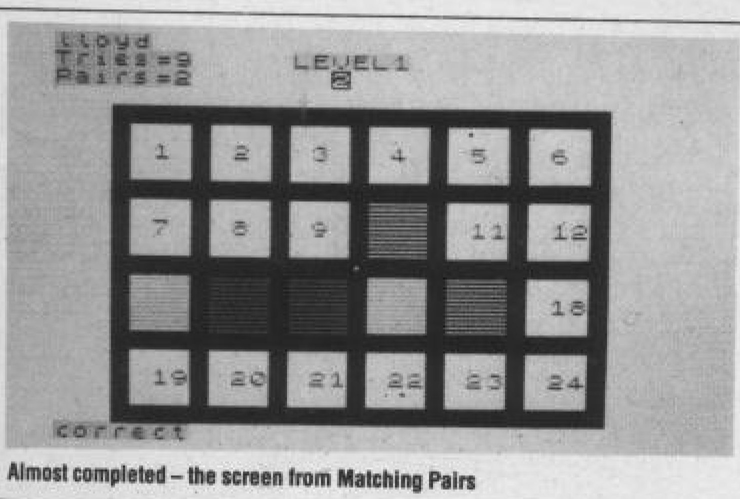
● *'There have been many versions of the aerial combat game since the Atari VCS came out with the Combat cartridge, but none that have been that good, and this version, in my opinion, follows in the others' footsteps. The graphics are average but flickery and the sound is poor.* Dogfight *makes quite a good two-player game which is fun with other people, but if you take a very good look at it, you'll see that it's a very basic sort of game with not much lasting appeal. It may appeal to younger children.'*

● 'Had *Dogfight* appeared a year ago it would undoubtedly have been a big success. The main problem with it, I think, is that it hasn't enough variation in the basic game to make it addictive, and it does have to be played with two players to be any good at all. If you are in two then it is great fun for a while and certainly requires more skill and tactics than the old Atari 'Combat' games. The graphics are neat and reasonably smooth in animation, the sound works quite well and the controls are simple. I'm not quite sure how to react to *Dogfight.* I did enjoy it, it could be addictive in two, but I can't really see it having much lasting appeal. It isn't a bad game at all, but somehow, not quite a good one either.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Dive 1 and Ø, Climb q and P, slow is CAPS and SYM SHIFT, fast Z and BREAK, fire A and ENTER
Joystick: unfortunately not stated anywhere
Keyboard play: fairly well positioned for two-player game and responsive
Use of colour: above average
Graphics: rather simple generally, aircraft nicely drawn
Sound: poor to fair
Skill levels: 8
Lives: depends on hits allowance
General rating: a somewhat old fashioned game with reasonable level variation, not thought to be very addictive and a little expensive for what it offers.

Use of computer	55%
Graphics	49%
Playability	55%
Getting started	57%
Addictive qualities	39%
Overall	**47%**



Almost completed – the screen from Matching Pairs

● *'Matching pairs* has a limited appeal and might even be considered as an educational program almost. For the general games player it is far too simple an idea to be playable for very long. At £1.99 it might just be worth considering, but at £2.99 it really isn't.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: numeric input and ENTER
Joystick: unnecessary
Keyboard play: reasonable
Use of colour: quite nice variations
Graphics: extremely basic
Sound: reasonable tune, entry beeps
Skill levels: 5
Features: 2-player game
General rating: very limited appeal guessing-memory game, may suit young children well.

Use of computer	55%
Graphics	N/A
Playability	47%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	32%
Value for money	40%
Overall	**47%**

KOSMIK PIRATE

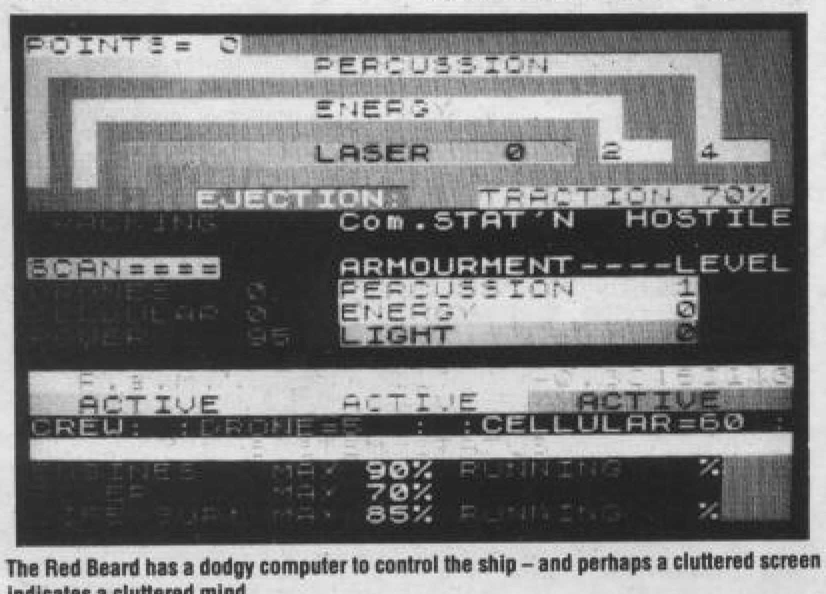


Producer: **Elephant Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.65**
Language: **BASIC**

You are captain of the out-dated space craft Red Beard 2, which basically makes you a pirate. You have embarked on a course of action which will result in your wreaking havoc in the orbital shipping lanes. The Red Beard has torpedoes with which to attack, a worn out and unreliable on-board computer, and a crew consisting of drones and cellular beings.

The game is played like a simple option advanture-cum-strategy game, the screen display being the computer display for the ship. During chases, says the inlay, the computer will give you a representation of the chase and attack. This takes the form of a semi-3D representation of space with a firing cursor, moving stars and a victim ship. Using the directional keys will effectively bring the victim into the firing line.

A damaged ship may be boarded and plundered. You could become dictator of Earth.



The Red Beard has a dodgy computer to control the ship – and perhaps a cluttered screen indicates a cluttered mind

CRITICISM

● 'There is obviously not enough instruction provided with this game, so it is very hard to understand what is going on. And from what I can understand, this is a very boring game with no sound and hardly any graphics. When the program asks for an input (to be answered in numeric form) it takes a long time for the computer to accept the answer. If by mistake you press the wrong key at the wrong time, the game crashes. I have also discovered that when I chose to attack a ship, laboriously typed in the values of the lasers,crew and power etc., and finally got to do battle, that the movement keys don't work.'

● *'Where do you start with this game? No indication is given as to what you are supposed to be doing (at least not in a direct form). The screen is totally crammed with information, the majority of it being completely useless. The computer asks for inputs – the inputs are not acknowledged – sometimes you have to keep your finger on the key for minutes before anything happens.*

There are some moving graphics in the game, although what you are meant to do with them, I'm still not quite sure. Where has 'all the excitement for all the family' gone? One of the most pathetic attempts at programming I have seen for the last twelve months.'

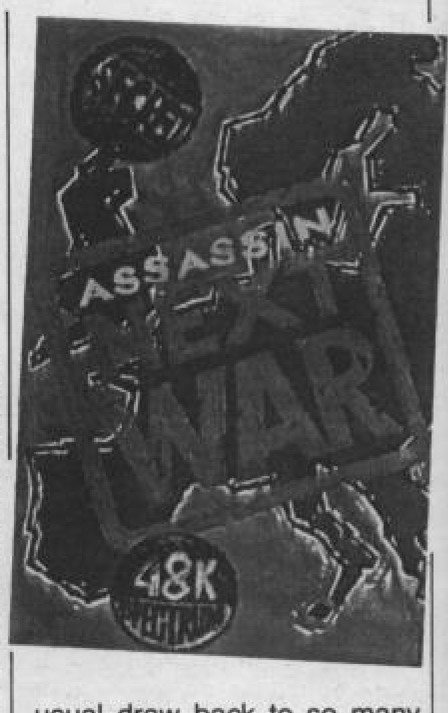
● 'The inlay makes a heavy point about not using the ENTER key, yet without any instruction, there doesn't seem to be any other way of getting the thing working. All too easily you can be presented with a delicately woven tapestry of stars working their way down the screen with the message finally appearing – SYSTEMS POWER DOWN. Very funny – yes, you've crashed. Great! How come a games programmer can spend more time working out a clever, clever way of crashing a game than on the actual game itself? In play, *Kosmik Pirate* is a sort of strategy simulation with knobs on – the knobs in this case being to find out how to work the ship in the first place. Simply ill-executed rubbish.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: (for space attacks) CAPS/X left/right, B/M up/down, S to fire otherwise numeric input
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: terrible with appalling responses
Use of colour: rather pointless and very messy
Graphics: poor
Sound: poor to non-existent
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
General rating: terrible.

Use of computer	7%
Graphics	5%
Playability	3%
Getting started	0%
Addictive qualities	0%
Value for money	1%
Overall	**3%**

NEXT WAR



Producer: **Assassin Software**
memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.00**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **A. Young**

Next War is a battle simulation with a scenario set in the near future with the NATO forces under your control facing a massed attack from the Warsaw Pact battalions. With an option to initiate nuclear warfare, *Next War* should probably be played to a background of *Frankie Goes to Hollywood.* The game is for one player against the computer and operates in an interesting manner, namely that all your allowed moves for various units are entered and when this is completed, the computer moves its forces one move at a time, while the computer displays the moves you have already entered, also a move per unit at a time. This eliminates, to some extent, the usual draw back to so many strategy war games that units seem to make enormous leaps across the countryside in a flash.

There are six main scenarios included in the program, all loaded at the same time, and these comprise: 1) Base Defence – an introductory scenario; 2) Surprise

17

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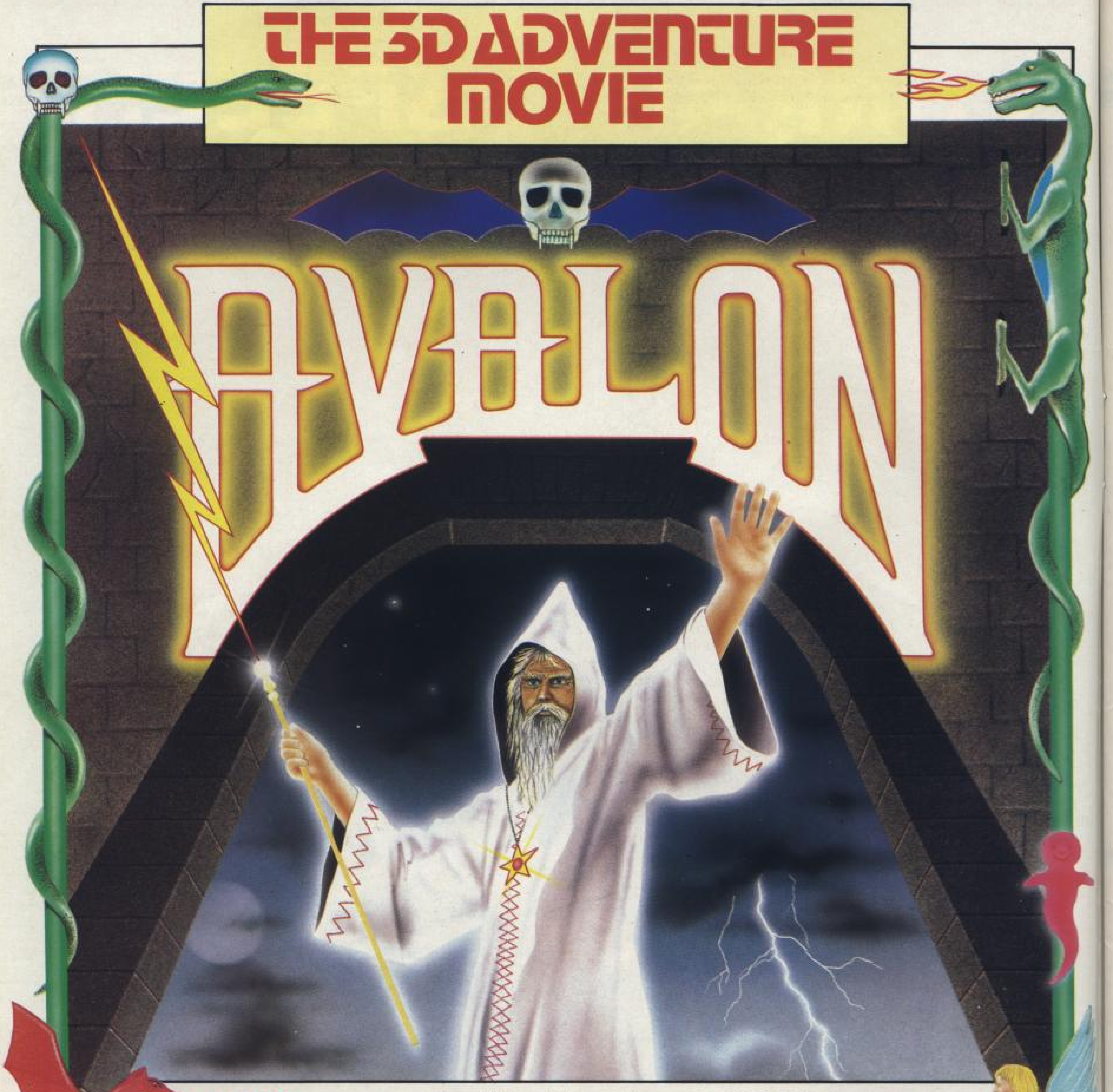
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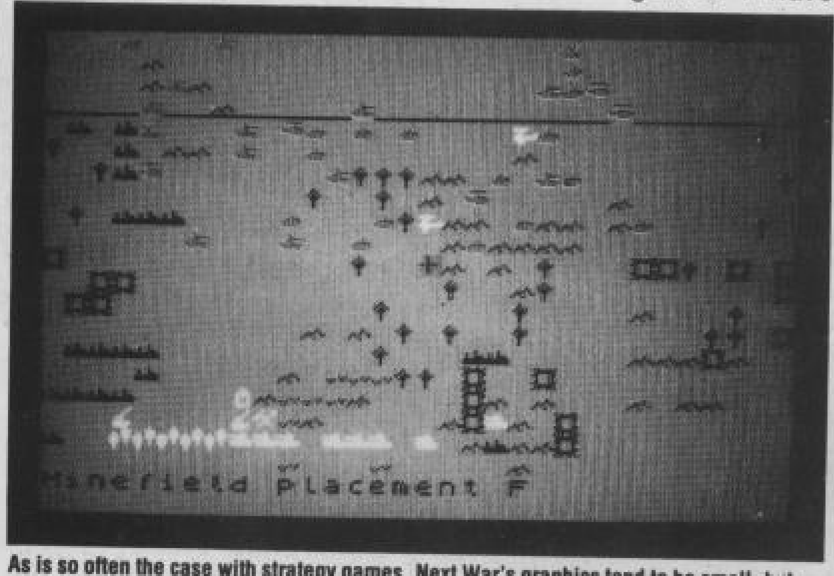
Frankie says – WAR! the doom-laden title screen from Next War.

Attack, where you must rush forces to the front to hold off the Warsaw Pact forces, who have attacked from barracks; 3) NATO Last Stand, the destruction of the last NATO units on the continent of Europe; 4) Reality, which shows what would really happen were the Warsaw Pact ever to attack; 5) NATO Counterattack – a dream scenario! 6) User designed, which enables the player to set up game elements to his/her own choice.

As you can see from the above, *Next War* takes place on the plains of Germany. The map, basically a green screen, shows the location of cities, towns, hills, forests and swamps. Your forces are infantry, engineers, helicopters and tanks, which are shown in white and facing left, while the enemy forces are shown in red facing right. This orientation is important because information lines at the bottom of the screen will show what type of unit has defeated or been defeated by you with a black symbol and the direction it is facing in is a quick reference.

Units may be moved in 8 directions and a certain number of moves depending on the unit type. Units which may be moved flash and pressing the appropriate direction key will cause it to move one step. This way, units may be moved with great flexibility. With the move completed, the unit symbol returns to its start position to await the Movement Phase, units of both sides will try to fulfill their orders and fight automatically with any results being displayed in the information line. Artillery has a range of 3 squares, and targets must be selected. According to air strength available an option for an airstrike on a single target may be offered.

The basic objective of *Next War* is to hold the Warsaw pact forces for long enough to allow NATO reinforcements to arrive. According to current trends of thinking, the player will be doing well if he can hold off the enemy for at least 25 turns, at which point reinforcements should arrive and a victory can be possible. The timescale is 12 hours each turn. Between turns there are two phases which are very important – the Reinforcement phase and the Command phase. The first allows the allocation of reinforcements (if there are any), the second offers options to see the enemy's structural make-up in rough or in detail and ask for command aid (usually refused in the opening moves). There is a lot more to *Next War* than can be usefully contained in short review, and much of it must come from the player's experience as the instructions are not particularly detailed.



As is so often the case with strategy games, Next War's graphics tend to be small, but reasonably clear.

CRITICISM

● 'This game has a very gloomy outlook for the future with five different levels of play to destroy mankind, plus one level you can define whether to nuke the Russians or bomb them to hell. I thought this was a very poor war game which lacked realism, using small graphics that don't resemble tanks or anything like a weapon at all.'

● 'Next War *is one of the most flexible war games I have played of this type – that is, moving forces around and playing the computer. Although you are up against overwhelming forces, strategical disposition of your units can allow you a great deal of success. Assassin have also overcome one of the more boring aspects of such games (the Movement Phase) by turning it into an animated move by move séquence which does require the player to act on artillery and airstrike attacks. A continuing drawback to the battle game, however, is the scale of the graphics. Naturally, on an area as big as this and with the amount of forces in action, there is a limiting factor to the size of the characters you can have. The result is always less than satisfactory and* Next War *suffers with this too. I think the ardent war gamer, who will undoubtedly enjoy the tactical operation as much as I did, will also seriously consider the use of a home-made board to control the game, or at the very least a list. One drawback I discovered to* Next War *is the rather limited instructions contained on the inlay. It is hard to discover at first what your units are, comprise of or are doing, and note taking is recommended until you are completely familiar with it all.'*

COMMENTS

Control keys: 8 directional keys plus some command keys, sensibly arranged
Keyboard play: movement response is fairly fast
Use of colour: red, green, white and black, reasonably defined
Graphics: small symbols, includes explosions
Sound: very limited, just beeps on actions
Features: user-designed scenario
General rating: a superior, slick war game for the purist, sole player.

Use of computer	**71%**
Graphics	**63%**
Playability	**70%**
Getting started	**51%**
Addictive qualities	**67%**
Value for money	**68%**
Overall	**65%**



SHOW JUMP

Producer: **IMS Software**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Richard Tonkin**

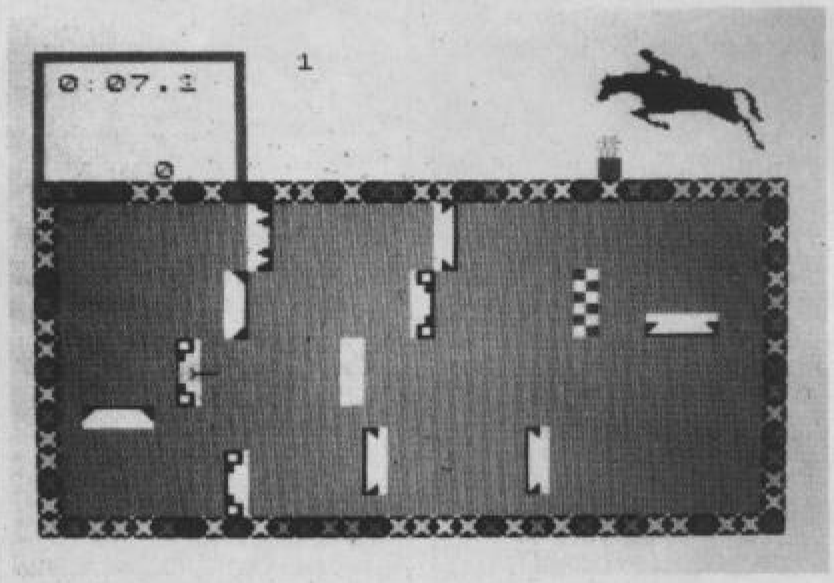
Show Jump comes in one of the larger sized plastic cassette cases, the sort that have a wallet for the inlay. However, there are no instructions or descriptions on the inlay. This might be considered a drawback to IMS since jumping horses over fences doesn't sound like too good a thing on the Spectrum as *Hickstead* proved. Which is a pity, because *Show Jump* actually has a rather elegant way of presenting the simulation.

When loading is completed the player is offered a choice of definable keys for the five controls – faster, slower, left, right and jump, and a choice of 8 courses over which to jump. These are of increasing complexity in layout, but all with ten fences of various types. The playing screen is divided into two areas. The larger is a green rectangle bordered by the traditional; show jump flowers with a plan view of the fences, a blue chequered block for starting and a red one for finishing. Your horse and its rider are represented by a short line with a small Y for the head.

Above this is a narrower strip with a red bordered square containing the time elapsed since crossing the start (real time) and fault points accrued. The rest of the strip is an animated simulation, and form the elegant solution to presenting this game. On the right is a large graphic of horse and rider. They can be seen walking, trotting or cantering to speed quite accurately although they stand on the spot. On approaching a fence, seen on the plan below, the fence seen from the side appears from behind the timing square and rushes towards the rider, allowing a very accurate judgement to be made as when to jump. Equally, running into the edges of the jumping area results in the flowers appearing until the horse runs into them and you retire hurt.







'Coming up to full speed – and there goes Harvey Smith, bucketing over the jump. . .'

As in real show jumping, the fences must be taken in a specified order. This is indicated by the next jump to be taken flashing. Taking a wrong jump or going over it in the wrong direction will mean disqualification.

CRITICISM

● 'On first looking at *Show Jump* I thought, oh no, another very basic looking attempt at a sport simulation that can't work well on a small home computer. But I changed my mind after a few minutes. The screen looks attractive, always a big help, and the animation of the horse and rider is excellent. A lot of detail has gone into the game, for instance the border round the jumping arena has various coloured crosses representing the flower boxes. When these appear on the top section if you ride too close, the coloured flowers in the boxes there exactly match those seen on the arena border. Such details don't actually make a game of course, but they do help. In play, *Show Jump* proves to quite difficult, and your horse seems to have as much character and individuality as one would expect from an animal, which is to say, it has a mind of its own at times'! Very interesting and playable without being, perhaps, madly addictive.'

● Show Jump *is a fairly original type of game which does have enough appeal to make it above average. It is not addictive enough to make it a 'super' game. The animation of the horse is very good. Perhaps more variety in the layout of the courses etc. would have made it a little more interesting.'*

● 'I found this game interesting as an idea, but in the end a little unplayable. Controlling your horse isn't very easy. The problem being the 'left' and 'right' are always from the rider's point of view and therefore alter to opposites for the player watching the screen. In fact it's easier played on the keyboard than a joystick, not being ultra-fast, as this seems to allow better control. I would have thought that there could have been a wider allowed-jumping-area on the fences, certainly on the simpler courses. As it is, it's rather narrow and accuracy sometimes gets in the way of fun. A novel idea and generally well executed, I thought, which will probabley appeal to many players, especially if fond of equestrian events.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: preset as Q/A up/down, O/P left/right and K for jump – good positions, but also user-definable

JUMP

Producer: **Unique**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£5.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **José Manuel Gutiérrez**

This is one of the Spanish games from **Ventamatic** marketed in Britain through Unique. *Jump* actually seems a somewhat inappropriate name for this particular game – *Climb* or *fall* might have been more accurate. This is actually a Spectrum version of the arcade machine game known as *'Crazy Climber'*. Your climber is standing at the bottom of a tower block six windows wide. He automatically climbs up the front door, and after that, you're on your own. The object is to get to the top. Unfortunately all the rooms are occupied by what the inlay refers to as apes but more resemble angry looking versions of BBC deejay John Peel wearing *cans* on his head. Windows which are blank are safe, especially if the blue blinds are down, but any window with an 'ape appearing is bad news. When fully aroused, this violent species actually hurls potted plants down on our doughty climber, plunging him to his death.

Halfway up, the building has no windows in the centre, forcing you to climb on either the left or the right side. Further up still there is a giant ape blocking your path. Once at the top a tune is played and your are taken to the foot of another block with inhabitants throwing different objects at you.

CRITICISM

● '*Jump* has very attractive and well designed graphics. Your climber is of a large size with well moving arms and legs, but here lies the first problem. The control key number six, a left and a right movement, and then one for each of his arms and legs. This seems a bit of a fistful to cope with and makes playing the game very hard. Nevertheless, it has addicitivity because you always seem to want one more



Joystick: almost any via UDK
Keyboard play: responsive but rather hard in control
Use of colour: above average to good
Graphics: generally clear and simple, but horse animation is impressive
Sound: not much, fault beeps
Skill levels: different difficulty levels with courses
Screens: 8 courses
General rating: original, playable but not very addictive.

Use of computer	77%
Graphics	70%
Playability	60%
Getting started	66%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**64%**

go to see what happens next as the buildings do change quite a bit as you climb them.'

● *'A fairly good game copied from the arcade original. The aped resemble angry business men, but your climber is very detailed right down to his woolly climbing jumper and shiny, manageable hair. The graphics generally are above average and scroll nicely, although they can be a little jerky at times. As far as I know this is the only game of its type on the market, even though certain things are missing like the bird and the helicopter at the end, it's still a good copy of the original and very playable.'*

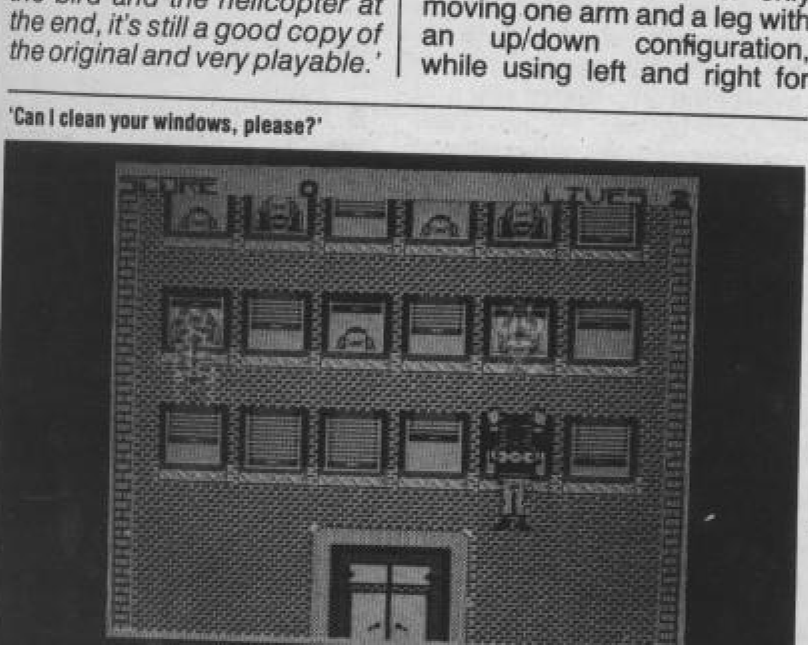
● '*Jump* has a nice front end, with horizontal scrolling letters forming the word JUMP passing behind the copyright details. The game is fun but very frustrating because I think the level of difficulty is a bit too high. It might have been more addictive, rather than less, if there had been fewer apes, and sometimes you don't stand a chance of gettin out of the way of falling pots at all. In this respect, the arms and legs movement could be easier to control, although with a programmable joystick interface I found I could settle for only moving one arm and a leg with an up/down configuration, while using left and right for sideways movement. Quite original for the Spectrum, and I think lots of people will find it addictive once the control factor is mastered.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 5/8 left right, left/right arm, T/U left/right leg
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: rather wierd positions but they work well once mastered
Use of colour: good
Graphics: large, detailed, generally good
Sound: simple tune with some effects during play
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
General rating: a difficult arcade game which may frustrate some, but should prove addictive to those who persevere

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	73%
Playability	75%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	75%
Overall	70%

'Can I clean your windows, please?'



MASTER MARINER

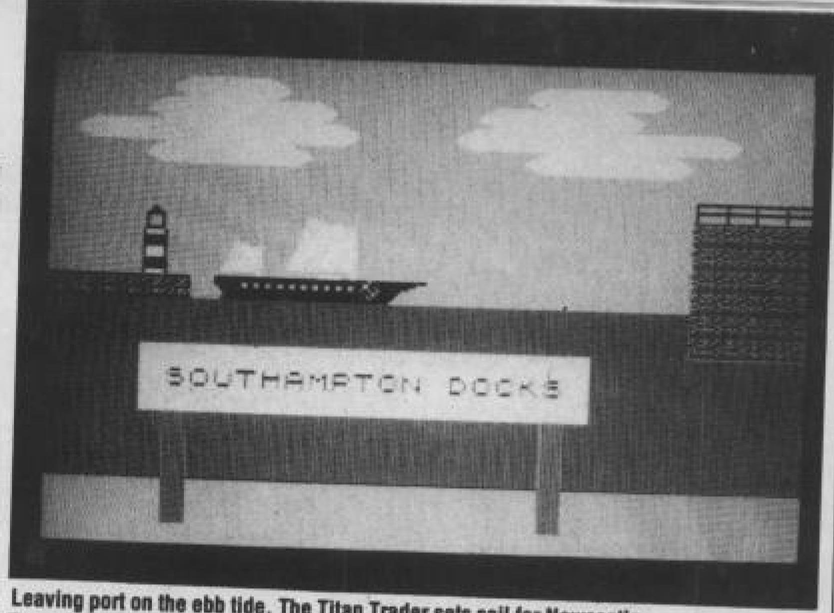
Producer: **Atlantis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code a basic**
Author: **Andy Morgan**

It's a cold grey, misty morning in early spring. As you walk down the quayside you stop and look up at the seagulls wheeling high above the dockyard . . .

So commences the amazingly long sheet of atmospheric instruction to this sailing/finance strategy game from Atlantis. Some of this intro is just colourful background, but it does also contain warning hints about the storms and having to jettison cargo to stay afloat, sudden sea mists and collisions, arming your ship against pirates, being aware of loan sharks, paying your harbour dues, paying your crew and insurance costs and so on.

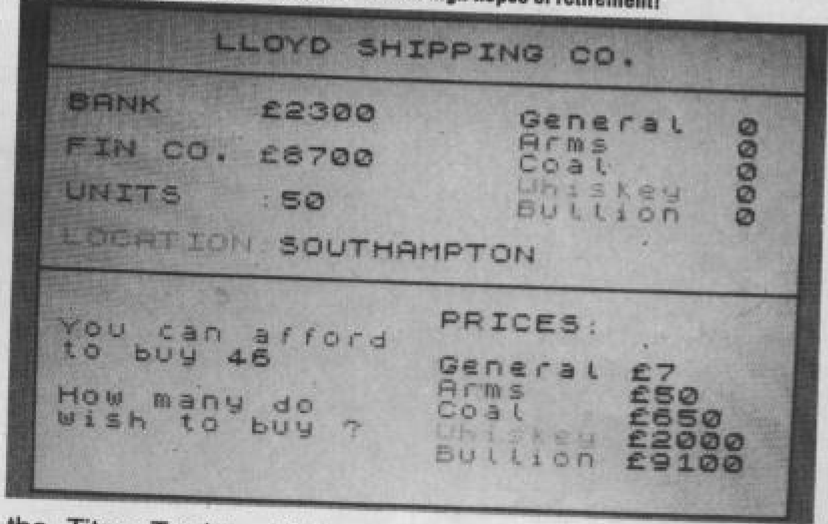
After a misspent life at sea, rounding the Horn, you have ammassed a sum big enough to buy your own vessel called the Titan Trader which can carry up to 50 units of cargo. You may choose from 5 types of cargo, general goods, arms (for which you will need a license although they are obtainable on the black market as illegal cargo), coal, whiskey and bullion. You may sail between any of 5 ports, being Southampton (where you start), Swansea, Liverpool, London and Newcastle and it takes one week per trip including time spent in port. Your ultimate aim is to make £1m and retire. Sounds ideal!

The playing screen is divided into two areas. At the top is your bank balance, the amount you already owe the finance company including interest (it starts at £7,000), the units of cargo your ship can carry and the types of cargo for reference. Below the line is the command area. You may elect to buy or sell, and the respective prices per cargo type are shown on the right. On leaving a port, the screen cuts to a shot of the docks with your ship sailing out. In between ports, the various hazards already mentioned will randomly occur. If you have payed your crew enough they may even repel the cut-throat pirates of Long John Quicksilva!



Leaving port on the ebb tide, The Titan Trader sets sail for Newcastle.

Lloyd Mangram Shippng Co. Starts life with high hopes of retirement!



CRITICISM

● 'The long intro implies that you must read through it in order to understand what is going to happen, but in fact it isn't really necessary as the game itself is fairly standard to the type and pretty self-explanatory. As the instructions have to be loaded first and then the game after reading through them, this is a bit irritating. Fair enough, they have provided alternative short instructions, but it is a bit tedious when reloading. The game



itself is straightforward and easy to play, and like so many of these games is fun. The fun, however, is probably as limited as the program, not a criticism aimed at this game alone, it tends to be common to many, that the variations allowed for are insufficient to command the attention for more than a few plays. But as the price, this is well worthwhile for those who enjoy the game of buying and selling.'

● 'Master Mariner *presents a number of random factors that affect you which are realistic, and unusually in these games, not to severe a hindrance to playing, which increases the playability. The actual display screen is well laid out and easy to use, and colour has been nicely used to highlight certain aspects. In between screens make a nice break and the graphics are well detailed, and they don't last too long! The game gets more progressively difficult with more hazards to avoid and more debts to pay off, until it gets to the point where it is very cruel! Overall, this is excellent value for money for this type of game, and I really enjoyed playing it.'*

● 'Nice little graphics, fun to play, *Master Mariner* works rather well in two, not that it's a two-player game, but it helps to have two minds working out the various selling and buying prices as you are unable to see in advance what they will be at the various ports of destinations and so able to make a decision before buying. It's probably unrealistic to expect demand and prices for commodities to alter so fast and over the extent of Britain so much, but that's a small quibble really. Pretty good value.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: simple prompted input
Use of colour: good
Graphics: clearly laid out text in Spectrum character set, neat, detailed drawings for sailing and unloading screens
Sound: simple tune and some effects beeps
Skill levels: 1
General rating: a simple finance/strategy game, no great shakes but excellent value for money.

Use of computer	N/A
Graphics	62%
Playability	71%
Getting started	74%
Addictive qualities	65%
Value for money	81%
Overall	**71%**



BRAXX BLUFF

Producer: **Micromega**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Tony Poulter**

Micromega describes *Braxx Bluff* as a 'Multi-screen 3D rescue', and in their search for the new, say it is the last of their series of 3D games, although 3D may well pop up now and again in future titles.

Centuries from now, man has progressed far beyond the limits of the solar system and has begun to explore distant worlds in search of knowledge and resources. The risk of danger is ever present and in every new system an Intergalactic Rescue Cruiser stands at readiness. It is a powerfully equipped orbital search and rescue vessel manned by volunteers of the Life Corps. You are one such, and today the emergency at Braxx Bluff will make you a hero, or just a memory...

Lifeship Vega has achieved orbit around the planet Prolon in response to an emergency call from the planet's explorations team, who have left their ship and gone off in the hydrocrawler and then fallen foul of the crawler's power-plant and the craft now lies in the treacherous terrain of Braxx Bluff, its occupants dying as the life-support system fails. Your mission is to walk on foot to the crawler – if you can find it – and get it back to base-ship before the crew dies. The nearest possible site to the stranded crawler has been marked with an ILS beacon. The game starts with you sitting in your shuttle slung under the bulk of the Lifeship. From your viewscreen you can see the underside of the ship above you and Prolon below. A keypress undocks and you glide down to skim the planet's atmosphere, then dip in and the game is away. The display shows you the view from your cockpit with two small circles to either side with a dot in each of them. Below the circles is the score. The circles are your ILS beacon and the object is to keep the dot in the very centre. The more it stays there the higher your score gets. To land on the runway you must score at least 8.0 points. As you dive down to the ground (judge by the altimeter) the 3D effect becomes stronger as the surface of the planet rushes up towards you. Don't forget to fire retro rockets on touch down!

Now you will have to walk on through the rocky landscape to find the crawler. Your only clue is the SOS signal it sends out – that and your score which increases when going in the right direction and decreases if not. You are unprotected and easy meat for the deadly 'Krittas'. It's hard to walk and aim your laser at the same time. If you find the crawler, a large graphic of it appears with you walking into its dubious safety. On the other hand the 30 power units you are carrying give it a boost.

Three wavy lines appear on the side – the crew members' life traces – a straight one means a dead man! You must now set off along the narrow, twisting track to safety, first through the ruined city and then through a deadly swamp. All the way the creatures are swooping to attack the power plant. Any that get past your crawler laser will drain another unit of precious energy Unfortunately it is impossible for one man to steer and fire at the same time.

The final barrier is the acid sea. The crawler cannot float, but can skim at high speed across the surface infested with huge rocks which must be steered between. At least out here there are no 'Krittas'. On the other hand you must listen to the pitch of the direction finder to reach the base ship. For successful rescuers, the finale has you beaching the crawler by the ship and walking into it to be greeted by the commander's face He's not impressed, you were a bit slow, and anyway, it's all in a day's work for a member of the Life Corps, so have another go...

CRITICISM

● 'Micromega has established itself as a house that comes out with solid ideas, well executed, and games that have a high playability and addictivity content. *Braxx Bluff* is no exception, again I must confess to having been disappointed with the graphics at first. After *Deathchase, Code Name Mat* and *Full Throttle*, these seem very simplistic. True enough the start screen is impressive, but the rest is

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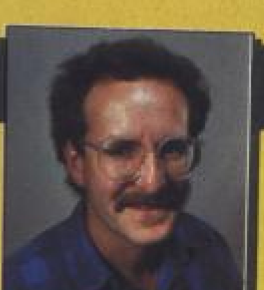
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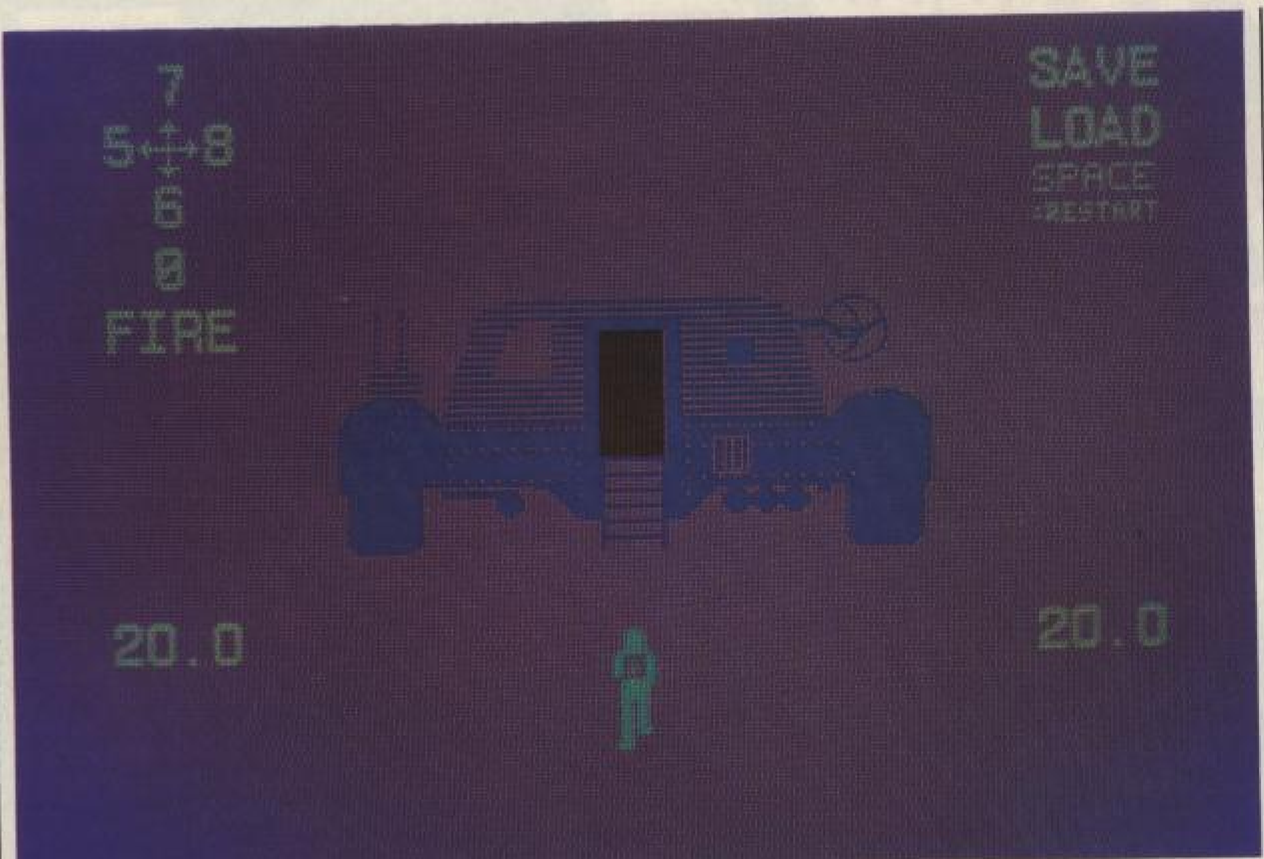
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Three lie inside awaiting rescue

View from inside the Crawler



made up of crude square blocks. But the astonishing thing is, that the more you play this game, the better the graphics seem to be! The simplicity allows a high speed 3D effect movement, best seen in the first stage – landing your shuttle, and the impression of rocks, buildings etc. is very effective. As to the game – well it isn't an easy one at all. The difficulty elements of not being able to steer and fire, and that of having to navigate by score and sound combine to make this an addictive game and a challeng. It's definitely not at all like any previous Micromega game, although the last stage is similar in feel to *Deathchase*. It also has a lot of variability in the different stages and after being doubtful at first, I'm now an ardent addict.'

● *The strange block graphics work effectively to create a strong impression of 3D in this-hyper active game. I like the way you have to cope with keeping the crawler's speed up to save the crew members' lives (and those little wavy life traces add an element of panic as they smooth out!) and yet be able to slow enough to safely shoot the creatures before they get past you When you are firing the laser, the crawler just keeps on its last heading, so it's very easy to run off the narrow road. Braxx Bluff is a rather strange game, but I thought it was appealing and certainly a hard challenge. To help the player gain that just-another-go-for-a-high-score feeling, you can save your position and score after each stage and then load it back again. This is quite a neat way of stopping you always having to go back to the start. The SAVE and LOAD is very quick.'*

● After *Braxx Bluff* had loaded and the impressive title screen had disappeared, I thought we'd have to eat our words about saying that reviewing Micromega games was a treat. But after playing it for a few hours I changed my mind, and in my view now, it's a really good game. Okay, the graphics ain't brill, very simple in fact, but they work and the 3D effect is pulled off pretty nicely – better to have simple, working 3D graphics, than excellently drawn graphics which just cause a mess as soon as they touch each other. This is an excellent value for money program and well deserves a place by *Deathchase*, *Code Name Mat* and *Full Throttle*. The game may not grab you at first but the you play, the more you'll like it. Definitely addictive and another winner from Micromega. A pity it has to be their last 3D game, but we live in hope!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: user-definable, with selected keys always on display on screen.
Cursor keys: are preset
Joystick: almost any via UDK
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: simple, but varied between screens and well used
Graphics: very good 3D effect, character movement on backgrounds is a little jerky, but the character animation works well
Sound: well used as a real element of playing
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
Screens: 5 playing screens, 3 in between screens
General rating: slow starter in affection stakes, proves to be highly addictive and playable, good value.

Use of computer	82%
Graphics	87%
Playability	91%
Getting started	93%
Addictive qualities	87%
Value for money	84%
Overall	**87%**

SABRE WULF

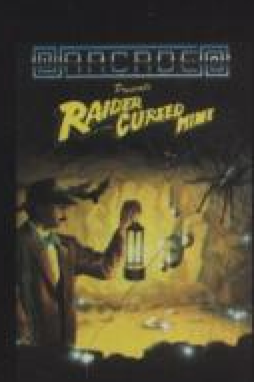
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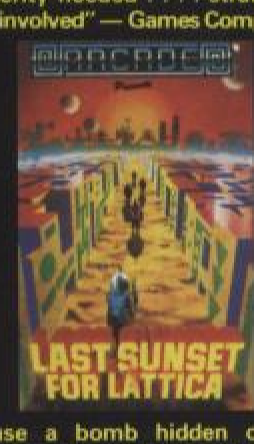




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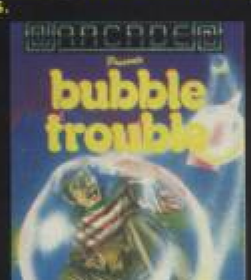
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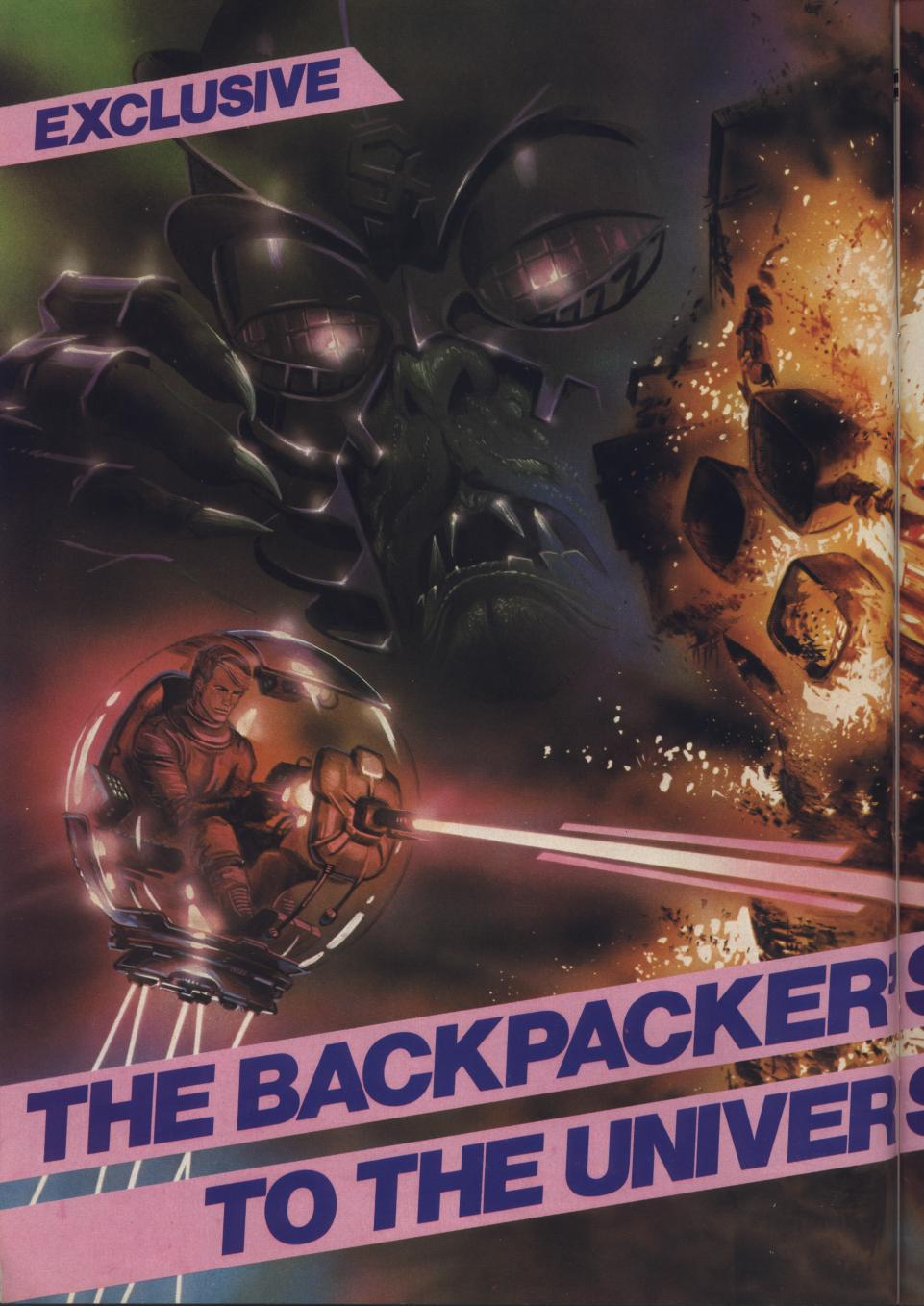
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EXCLUSIVE

THE BACKPACKER'S
TO THE UNIVERS





…GS GUIDE …RSE

The Return of Ziggy

Long before Arthur Dont and Foord Perfect roamed the galaxy with a towel and a battered copy of the Encyclopaedia Galactica, the super-hero Ziggy had gone a long way to solve the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe and everything. The answer, as everyone knows, was 42, an answer produced after much thought by Deep Thought, the computer with an awsomely deep and thoughtful voice. Spurning the required, tattered houndstooth check dressing gown of all intergalactic travellers, Ziggy had spotted the two amazing coincidences of the planet Imagit, where 15,217 software houses had each produced the same game on one day and plunged themselves into Cosmic War V over the games rights (the game was called The Pyramid); and that of the planet Sunder, where, in a moment of unparalleled frustration, the entire population of 8,000 million (who were all Pyramid nuts), began leaping up and down and tore Sunder asunder. The common denominator in these two coincidences was the Spectrum, a computer produced aeons ago on an insignificant planet called 'Earth'. Ziggy conducted tests on a Spectrum he had un'Earthed' in a museum and received some Astral co-ordinates. Travelling to the spot he discovered a giant guess what with loads of chambers, at the bottom of which lay the Question.

When the six stones capable of influencing the mind, cast millions of years before by a race of daft and forgetful elves, turned up in the hands of the infinitely evil Scarthax and Scarthax decided to use them to bring the entire Universe within his sphere of influence, it seemed logical to call on super-hero Ziggy to seek out the monster and collect the stones. Ziggy travelled to Scarthax's new home, a modern condominium called Doomsday Castle guarded by Urks, Garthrogs, Googly Birds, Neucleoids and Orphacs, and did battle. In the final, conflagratory conflict Ziggy triumphed and Scarthax was thought to be dead.

NOW READ ON . . .

THE BIG PLUG

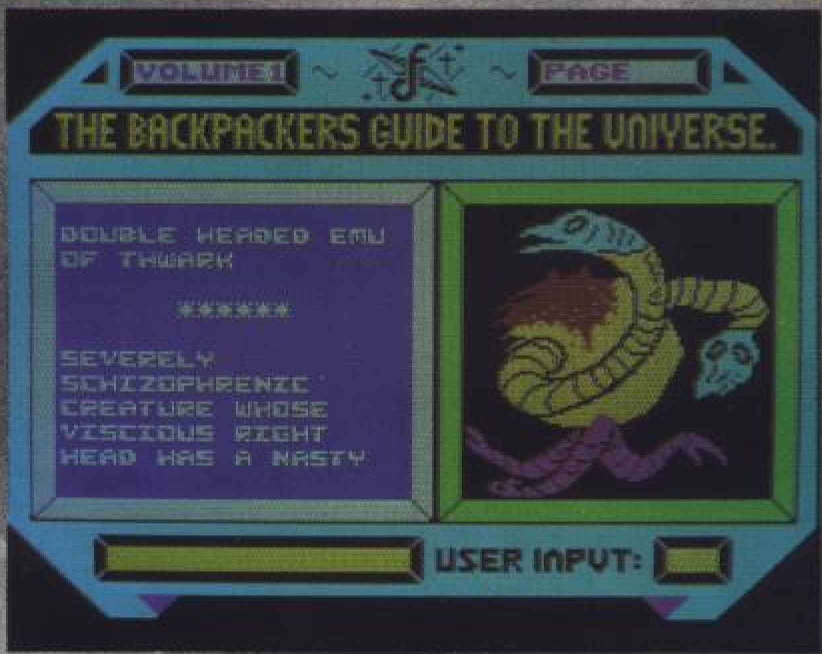
Ziggy, still tired from his epic adventures in the Pyramid and Doomsday Castle, has decided to take a vacation, and why not? To get away from it all he has gone to explore one of the remoter corners of the Universe. Armed with the latest edition of the *Backpackers Guide to the Universe*, he hopes to do some sightseeing. Ziggy is quietly perusing the guide when a message suddenly flashes up on his communications console and Ziggy finds himself trembling as he reads the devastating words.

The infinitely evil Scarthax, missing and presumed dead, is still very much alive and kicking, and infinitely mad that his plans for Universal domination were frustrated. Unfortunately he has discovered what countless adventures had failed to find through aeons of exploration – the legendary GREAT PLUG.

The Plug is not only great – it's big too. Should anyone pull it the whole of space-time, and every creation and moment in history contained within, will swirl down the plug-hole. Scarthax has given the Universe just 24 hours before he pulls it! Ziggy has a single day to thwart Scarthax for a second time – the fate of us all lies in his hands . . .



Ziggy, about to release the Double-Headed Emu of Thwark, finds himself set upon by two guardians and fights back with the flame thrower.



A marvel of modern technology – the Mini-Guide with its entry on the lifestyle and habits of the Double-Headed Emu of Thwark.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

The Cheltenham-based software house **Fantasy** unashamedly set out to create a super-hero in Ziggy, and with *Pyramid* and *Doomsday Castle* they appear to have succeeded. Ziggy, seated in his bubble-like 'Explora' capsule has become a familiar figure. Now he's back again in a mammoth game, the **BACKPACKERS GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE.** It's 'mammoth' because there are three parts and part one is out in October, parts two and three will follow at intervals. Each part is a separate game that can be played on its own, but to get the most from them, all three parts should be completed.

BACKPACKERS is played in real time. Scarthax has given the Universe only 24 hours to live and each part of the game represents approximately eight hours real time.



At last – Ziggy discovers the location of the essential volume of Zilurian Love Poems. The guide tells us that for Emus of Thwark, hunting for new volumes of love poems is even more important than hunting for food. Well – Fantasy never said they invented logical creatures . . .

To 'win' the overall game the player must complete all three parts within the 24 hours time span. Times for parts one and two can be cumulatively saved and loaded into subsequent parts for the total playing time to be recorded.

Part one is virtually complete as this is written and **Paul Dyer** and **Bob Hamilton** from Fantasy visited the CRASH offices to show us some bits of the game. Bob Hamilton, who spends his spare time running over hills and eating vegeratian food, has been working on BACKPACKERS for a long while. Indeed the basic concept pre-dates both *Pyramid* and *Doomsday Castle.* Paul, who is largely responsible for what he refers to as, probably the silliest scenarios ever written for any video game, has also been hard at it to get together the background for BACKPACKERS. Together, they are very enthusastic about the ideas contained in the games.

Paul takes up the story: 'Ziggy's sat in his intergalactic cruiser, not his capsule, when he gets this message from Scarthax. He decides that this is one particular thing that he really can't have a go at by himself. He sets out for a particular planet known as the Caverns of Exile, where there are dozens of types of creature – aliens, some friendly, some not so friendly – that are guarded either for their own good, or just to be kept there. And it's out of this rather weird and wonderful collection of creatures that he's actually going to get together his hit squad. And this really comprises Part One of *Backpackers Guide to the Universe.*'

THE TECHNOLOGY

Ziggy has always been inseparable from his 'Explora' capsule, but BACKPACKERS is something of a departure. Due to the nature of many of the tasks to be undertaken, the capsule is inadequate, forcing Ziggy to leave it behind. Naturally something else will be needed, and Bob Hamilton has burned the midnight oil devising an extraordinary machine. It's the **Backpack.**

Paul again: 'Now the Backpack is an amazing piece of technology, it really is. A lot of development went into this in the early days and Ziggy is one of the very few people who has actually got one – being a super-hero. As soon as he's landed on the Caverns of Exile he gets it out. The Backpak acts as a complete life support system, so he doesn't have to go back to his capsule for food or water or anything – it just keeps pumping the nourishment into him. It also acts as a jetpack, which we're familiar with from other such games! That's for getting across hard terrain. It also has the ability to act as a moon buggy – flaps come down and wheels come out, it's marvellous! In fact we're putting it on the market in a couple of years! And almost finally, it acts as a mini-sub for times when he has to to underwater work.

'The amazing thing about this Backpack is that it uses what Bob calls the latest in space-time compaction techniques. Exactly what this means is that no matter how big anything is – it fits in! Anything, whatever size will go into the backpack.'

THE BACKPACKERS GUIDE

But there's more to a game than the technology it represents. BACKPACKERS is a three part game, and Fantasy are keeping the exact contents of parts two and three a secret for the time being, but part one is a large and attractive maze type game, the maze being the Caverns of Exile. So Ziggy has landed his Intergalactic Cruiser, abandonned the trusty capsule and donned his amazing technicolor backpack to go in search of the wierd and wonderful caged creatures in the Caverns. The caverns are filled with roaming guards, most of them inimical (they kill!), which is where the backpack's powerful flame thrower comes in handy. But what Ziggy is really after is a fighting crew, to go after Scarthax.

'We've been trying to find a way round the problem of making the game playable so that someone who's not too good at games can still have a lot of fun and enjoyment out of it, whilst still providing something for the serious games player who wants a challenge,' says Paul. 'Now that's something that's quite difficult. So what we've done is make it very simple to travel around the caverns, reach lots of places, appreciate all the pretty graphics and so on. Collecting the creatures you need is not amazingly difficult either. BUT . . .

'You get down there, you fill the backpack with the creatures, get back to your cruiser, churn the pack out and expect to find countless numbers of aliens and you find that half of them have died because you didn't give them the right food, you find that two creatures have eaten a third, and the Emu with two heads has killed himself. So in effect, there's more to it than meets the eye at first. In other words, certain cretaures cannot be put into the backpack together, others need certain types of food – so you'll need to know about these things. And the only thing that gives the answers, although they might not be straightforward – is the Backpackers Guide.'

The Guide is large, rather too large to fit into the program, so Fantasy have had to provide it as a separate program on the other side of the tape. Not such a good idea, you might say – and be right. But the way it has been incorporated is quite clever. The main guide acts as a sort of giant help sheet to be absorbed between bouts of playing the game, or when really and truly stuck. The compromise Fantasy has made – and the final point about the amazing Backpack – is to have it carry a mini-version of the guide. This means that at any time during play, you can escape from the state of play and the screen will cut to the mini-guide console. This tells you mostly things that the main guide tells you, but in a shorter and less elaborate way. Thus, for instance, we learn that the Double Headed Emu or Thwark is a schizophrenic character with a passive head and a vicious one. Taken from its cage the vicious head will inevitably kill the passive one, thus killing itself in the process. But it is susceptible to love poems, so Ziggy's task is first tolocate the suitable love poems so that the passive head can read them and keep the vicious head happy. Simple when you know how!

In such diverse ways, Ziggy can go about collecting all the various creatures which will form his hit squad in the second and third parts of the overall game. The caverns where these aliens are imprisoned is quite complex. Bob Hamilton, who has written the program, has not been entirely responsible for the graphic design, so he's not boasting when he says that they are aiming to get the 'prettiest looking game of the year' award for BACKPACKERS. 'The maze is reasonably interesting itself,' says Bob. 'There are various time locks and time-locked areas, and various keys to open doors. They are not actually doors, they're stalactite/stalagmite pairs that move apart if you have the right key. So there are areas of the maze that are really long loops, but if you've got the right key you can get into secret passages and make short cuts. There's also pot holes which you can fall down. If you fall down one you can use a joystick to control a grab arm on the backpack and there's ledges it can grab hold of to drag you back to safety.'

Another element which relates to this real time play-concept in BACKPACKERS is backpack damage time. Running into walls and aliens can cause damage to the equipment and although you won't have to wait around in real time for the damage to be repaired back at the intergalactic cruiser, the real amount of repair time is added on to your playing time. In effect, it's a bit like injury time in football matches.

TOWARDS SCARTHAX

Ziggy has his work cut out to defeat Scarthax, and meanwhile the villian of the piece is still sitting on the Great Plug. Looking to future parts of the game, Ziggy must find and obtain a means of sealing the plug for eternity. Legend has it that there is only one force capable of this task, and that is the force unleashed when the ONE KEY engages in the ONE LOCK. The lock and key are reputed to be held in a place known as the Enigma Zone. many adventurers have entered the Enigma Zone but none have ever returned (surprise, surprise!). It is rumoured that to retrieve the lock and key one must negotiate innumerable hazards, solving riddles and puzzles on the way – but, of course, no one is really sure for no one has survived to tell the tale. It is a prospect that even Ziggy finds forbidding, but enter the Zone he must, and return he must, in order to face Scarthax in the FINAL CONFLICT.

The BACKPACKERS GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE should be generally available sometime this month and will be reviewed in the next issue of CRASH.





FROM TIN SOLDIERS TO COMPUTER GAMES

Roger Kean talks to Angus Ryall about GAMES WORKSHOP . . .

'This is where the Dark Leopard and Lord Silver lived. Due to Telfior's disappearance they had been unable to pay the rent owed to the guild. They had with them 35 red xvarts, 10 yellow xvarts, and 15 blue xvarts. They were all peacefully devoted to mining purpure, when the Dark Leopard disappeared and Lord Silver had an argument with the red xvarts. They murdered him and fled to the other end of the island, much to the consternation of the loyal blue and yellow xvarts . . .

'This is a reflection, almost identical in basic shape, of the real house and wall, called into being on a parallel plane by the Heart. This house contains several undoubted illusions, but many real things from the Pine Material Plane have become trapped inside as well.'

The above are two quotations from *The Sunfire's Heart* – and AD&D adventure from the magazine *White Dwarf* (No. 57, September issue). I quote them here to illustrate the baffled admiration many of us feel for fantasy role-playing games (or FRP if you're in the AD&D set). Such feelings can rapidly turn to sheer bewilderment when we read:

'If a dungeon master decides to use psionics in his campaign, at least one player *has* to end up psionic or else the whole psionic system is forgotten as the campaign goes on. If none of the players are psionic – and according to the present *AD&D* rules, once it has been determined that you don't have psionic potential, you *never* will – the dungeon master isn't going to waste his/her time with NPCs and monsters who are psionic. Why bother? The psionic monster can't psychically attack non-psionic players who are immune to everything but the costly *Psionic Blast,* and the best part of psionics, the psionic-to-psionic combat can't happen, unless the characters get their jollies watching two psionic NPCs fight.'*

It's astonishing how much energy and character projection fans of Dungeons & Dragons and fantasy role-playing games will put into their hobby. You may wonder what this has got to do with computer games, but few Spectrum owners can fail to be aware that the computer game has developed out of a decade of interest in role-playing games. The computer adventure is, indeed, a role-playing game for one person. With few exceptions 'you' are playing a role in the adventure, with the computer providing all the other characters and situations.

Role-playing games such as the D&D adventures played out at Peckforton Castle in Cheshire have come a long way from their early beginnings, and have developed far more obscure and fantastic scenarios than most computer adventure games yet. It was perhaps inevitable that a large industry should grow up centred around the continuing fascination with role-playing games, and not surprising that any form of fantasy situation should be attached to it such as wargaming, with its elements of immers-

*Quotation from the article *'Mind Over Matter' Psionics and AD&D and Fantasy Role-Playing Games* by Todd E. Sundsted.

ing yourself in the strategy of the created situation. This form of role-playing can take a number of forms from dice and board games to the more inventive and free-wheeling 'tin soldiers' level of manulipating models on a large playing area, right through to the (to CRASH readers) more familiar computer war games.

In the more classic area of D&D adventures, the pedigree of material to be drawn upon is extensive. Fantasy situations in book form (more popularly referred to today as *Sword & Sorcery*) have their roots firmly in the writings of people like **Edgar Allan Poe** (more of a psycho-horror writer) and fellow American **H.P. Lovecraft** (more interested in arcane monsters,that reflect the inner turmoil of mankind). Before them **Bram Stoker's** *Dracula* and **Mary Shelley's** *Frankenstein* creations were heightening the consciousness of Victorian fans. But with **J.R.R. Tolkien** came a new outlook – an invented world outside of our universe in which recognisable characters worked out their puzzles and solutions in a mythical land. *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* by Tolkien were to set a trend that has lasted strongly until the present day. Quite suddenly, mythical creatures like elves, dwarves and dragons became respectable.

The interest in such material has remained constant, helped by doses of Hollywood celluloid and more books from modern authors like **Michael Moorcock, Stephen Donaldson** (Thomas Covenant series) or **Julian May** (Many Coloured Land series). Not surprisingly, as soon as the home computer came along, programmers set to with a will to translate these ideas into computer adventures – and *The Hobbit* from Melbourne House hardly needs any introduction.

Behind all this industry there is a British company which has been at the very heart of fantasy role-playing games – and now they are launching a range of computer games as well.









WORKING AT GAMES

It is about ten years ago that **Games Workshop** emerged as a dark force in fantasy, the brainchild of two young writers, **Steve Jackson** and **Ian Livingstone.** Since then they have covered a lot of ground, but for CRASH readers (who aren't already fanatic D&Ders) their names may be more familiar from *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain. Warlock* was developed from an idea that had already been a great success for the two, *Fighting Fantasy Books*. These volumes, published by Puffin Books, are computer adventure games in written form. At certain points in the story, the reader is offered several options and may choose, or roll a dice, which to take. So the books may be read through several times, each time coming up with a different story idea – just as happens in a computer game. *Warlock* (the program) was written by Simon Bratell and Neil Mottershead (Crystal), who had previously written the most successful action/arcade style D&D game, *Hall of the Things*.

But *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* is only the tip of the iceberg, as **Angus Ryall,** Marketing Co-ordinator for Games Workshop told me on his recent visit to Ludlow (which has a very nice castle for role-playing games by the way).

The most visible aspect is the chain of shops across the country. Games Workshop shops are in London, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield and Manchester, and another is opening soon in York. Recently the company acquired the Games Master chain with shops in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Newcastle and another Games Workshop should be opening soon in Baltimore in the States. These shops are dungeons packed with board games for assisting in fantasy role-playing, strategy and wargames, models and computer games, posters, books, t-shirts and all the paraphernalia any self-respecting let's-pretend fan would need.

In addition to the shops and the Fighting Fantasy series, Games Workshop have their own publishing division and a metal foundry or two. Chronicle and Citadel Miniatures not only design model soldiers but also cast them in lead. According to Angus Ryall, this unlikely enterprise has difficulty in keeping up with the heavy demand. On the publishing side there is the successful magazine *White Dwarf*, from whence came the quotations at the start of this piece.

White Dwarf, soon to enter its sixth year of publication, has a long list of skilled and enthusiastic contributors from among whom Games Workshop is able to draw writers for devising computer games scenarios. And it seems inevitable that Games Workshop should finally turn its attention to the growing computer marker, as a software house instead of just being a retailer.

The illustrations on these pages are all by Pete Martin, well known for his contributions to White Dwarf magazine. SOme of them are from the forthcoming booklet accompanying the game Tower of Despair by Games Workshop.

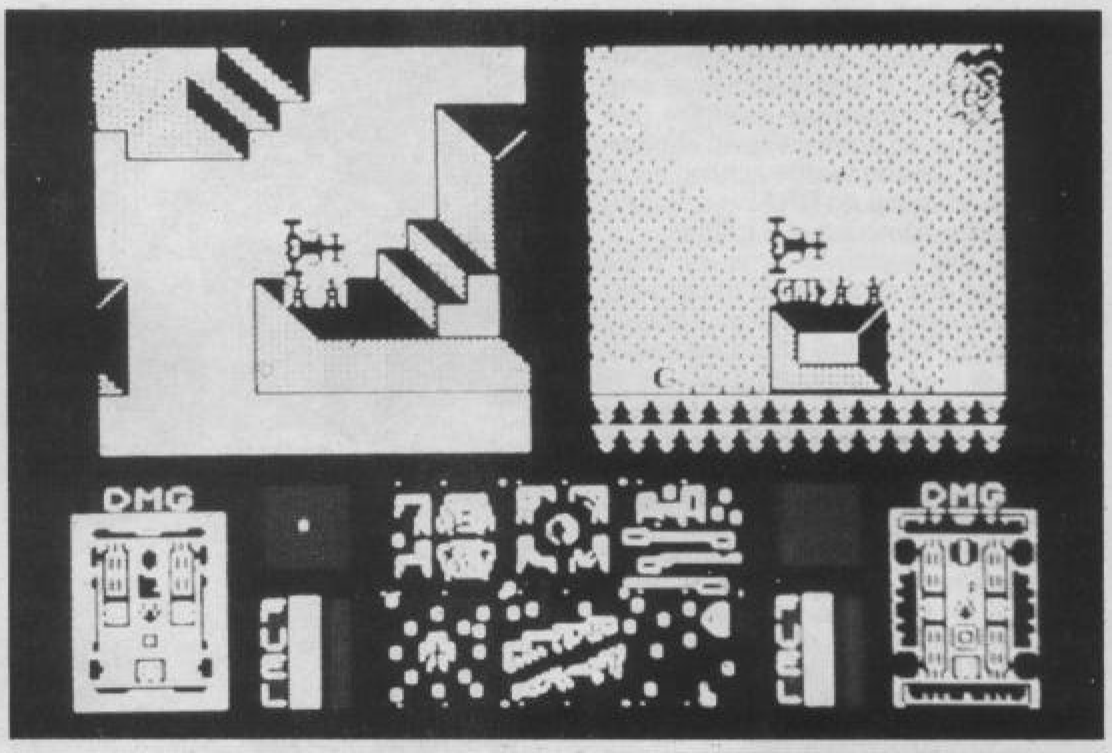
FLAME THROWERS AND DRAGON SLAYERS

Late September should see the launch of three games for the 48K Spectrum from Games Workshop. *Battlecars* is rather more straightforward than one would expect from a company so immersed in the occult (!) but in fact it is designed to be played by two protagonists simultaneously, and so continues in the theme of human-to-human conflict rather than human-versus-computer. The original plan had been to release it only in this version, but marketing sensibility has dictated making it playable between player and the computer as well.

As you can see from the screen photo, each player has not only his own car but his own playing screen too. Only when the cars are in each other's immediate proximity do the two screen pictures resemble each other. Below, in the centre, is a map of the total playing area, to either side a fuel gauge and then a damage status display. The cars may be armed with a wide variety of weapons including missiles, mines and machine-guns. The object is to hunt down your opponent and destroy him. Gas stations are dotted around for refuelling, but then you are vulnerable to attack of course. There are also service garages for carrying out repairs from time to time, also leaving you vulnerable. Control of the cars includes a 'drift' factor, which makes handling these high speed vehicles quite alarmingly realistic – with practice you should be able to do handbrake turns!

D-Day is more obviously in the line of Games Workshop history – a war game simulation based on the World War II Normandy landings. This is a two-player game with no computer intelligence, and so is ideal for play-by-mail, which Games Workshop are thinking of arranging. One player takes command of the landing Allies and the other plays the role of the German defenders. There are four scenarios contained within the program including The Landing, The Break Out and Arnheim. Each map covers 63 ▶ 63 unit screens. These can be scrolled across to keep control of the between forty and sixty units available to each side. Unlike many army manoeuvrement games, *D-Day* has a very fast scrolling cursor movement for selection and guidance of units, and in many ways resembles Imagine's *Stonkers* visually. Unlike *Stonkers,* however, this is a classic strategy war game which requires a deal of skill and judgement against another human opponent. A deal of realism has been incorporated to take account of things like units being able to move faster on roads than on rough ground. Artillery fire is seen in animation right up to the final explosion, and the graphics throughout are large enough to be easily identifiable by shape.

'There's been nothing like if for the Spectrum,' said Angus Ryall. 'A decade of wargaming experience is behind it. And that goes for the adventures too. We have contact with many experts in fantasy role-playing games who have been developing scenarios for years.'

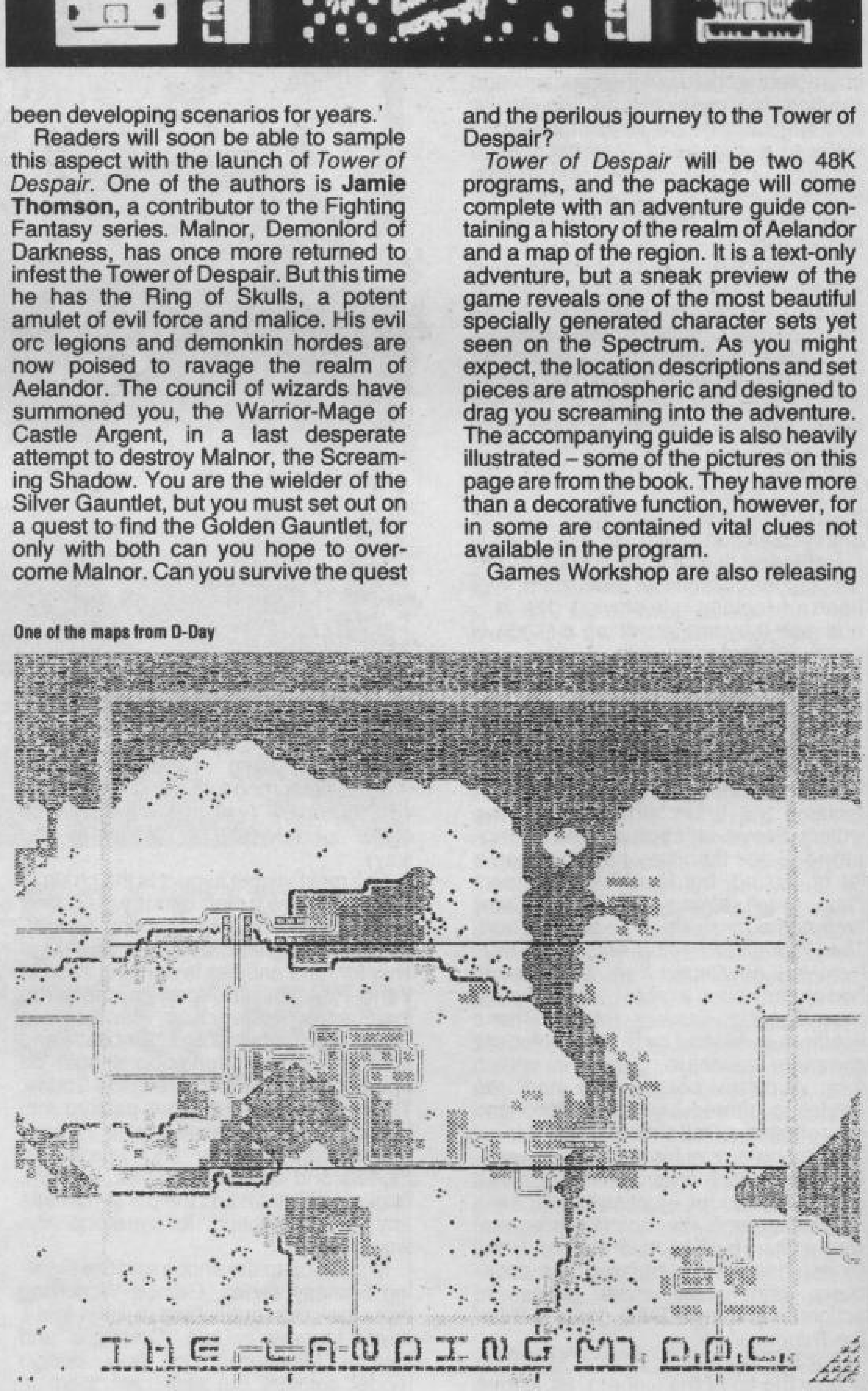


Readers will soon be able to sample this aspect with the launch of *Tower of Despair*. One of the authors is **Jamie Thomson,** a contributor to the Fighting Fantasy series. Malnor, Demonlord of Darkness, has once more returned to infest the Tower of Despair. But this time he has the Ring of Skulls, a potent amulet of evil force and malice. His evil orc legions and demonkin hordes are now poised to ravage the realm of Aelandor. The council of wizards have summoned you, the Warrior-Mage of Castle Argent, in a last desperate attempt to destroy Malnor, the Screaming Shadow. You are the wielder of the Silver Gauntlet, but you must set out on a quest to find the Golden Gauntlet, for only with both can you hope to overcome Malnor. Can you survive the quest and the perilous journey to the Tower of Despair?

Tower of Despair will be two 48K programs, and the package will come complete with an adventure guide containing a history of the realm of Aelandor and a map of the region. It is a text-only adventure, but a sneak preview of the game reveals one of the most beautiful specially generated character sets yet seen on the Spectrum. As you might expect, the location descriptions and set pieces are atmospheric and designed to drag you screaming into the adventure. The accompanying guide is also heavily illustrated – some of the pictures on this page are from the book. They have more than a decorative function, however, for in some are contained vital clues not available in the program.

Games Workshop are also releasing

One of the maps from D-Day





these three games for other machines later, and plans are afoot for more Spectrum games, possibly some combined with board games as well. The £3½m a year turnover company is set to expand its operations even further with the move into computer software publishing. 'We want tobecome known for high quality products,' Angus told me. To that end a lot of work goes into them and the games are going to demand a lot of work from players. But that's nothing new to fantasy role-players, and somehow the ethic is enshrined in the company's name – **Games WORKshop.**

Battlecars is written by SLUG (a Harlow co-operative of ex-programmers from Red Shift), *D-Day* is by Dagenham Design Cell, a group of young programmers aided by people from Red Shift (well known for their wargames like *Apocalypse*). *Tower of Despair* is written by Jamie Thomson (assistant editor of *White Dwarf*), Steve Williams, Russell Clarke and Mike McKeon.

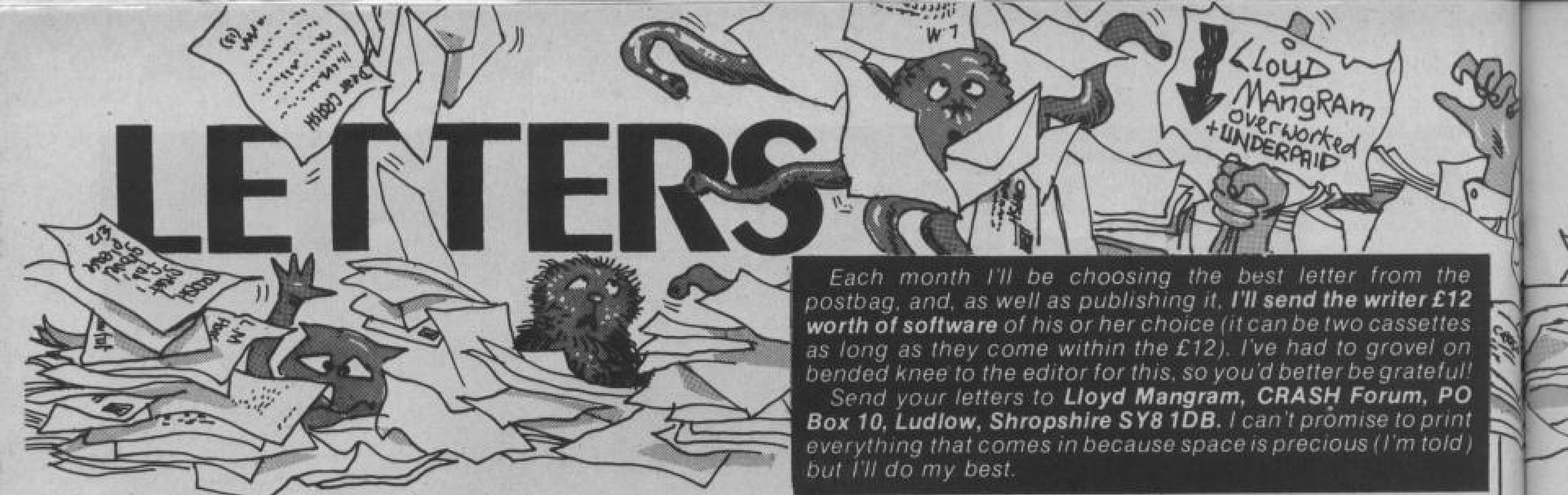
All three games are for the 48K Spectrum, priced £7.95 and should be available at all usual outlets, and CRASH MICRO MAIL ORDER.





The cover illustration from Tower of Despair, painted by Robin Hidden.

FROM TIN SOLDIERS TO COMPUTER GAMES



Each month I'll be choosing the best letter from the postbag, and, as well as publishing it, ***I'll send the writer £12 worth of software*** *of his or her choice (it can be two cassettes as long as they come within the £12). I've had to grovel on bended knee to the editor for this, so you'd better be grateful!*
Send your letters to ***Lloyd Mangram, CRASH Forum, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*** *I can't prŏmise to print everything that comes in because space is precious (I'm told) but I'll do my best.*

This month's intake of letters, Slimers and Tipsters has been pretty staggering. Ludlow Post Office is groaning under the weight (especially when you take into account the entire forest that has been cut down to draw *Sabre Wulf* maps on) – still, it's keeping them all in work! There are some nice comments about reviews and piracy, but I felt the letter of the month should go to twenty year old John Tappėr for his very jolly romp of a piece on Life the Universe and Everything . . .

Dear Lloyd,
Oh well, here we go again . . . I seem to spend half my life writing letters to computer magazines, the other half standing in a dole queue.

I've got lots to say (who hasn't?) but to start with I'm afraid I must refer to many of the letters featured in your column in issue 7 (August): quotes such as "After the box caught my eye, I paid £9.95" and numerous complaints that "there are so many games, how can one possibly buy them all?"

Sick isn't it?

If I could walk into a shop tomorrow and slap down a tenner without even attempting to discover what it was that I was buying, I'm afraid I would have to agree with the first person who came up to me and said "Hello . . . WALLY BRAIN!"

No, I'm not a miserable old sod who despises young kids with rich parents, but surely the idea of a computer game is 'FUN', not just another pretty screen display to collect. And they do, don't they? . . . People have game collections like they have record collections. Buy it Saturday, solve it by Monday, brag in school and buy the next game. I was of an impressionable age when the archaic old heap 'Space Invaders' first arrived via the Jumbo from Nipponland and I loved it. I managed to waste every single 10p piece I owned on that game, and its successors. I remember when Galaxians was the NEW game and when Defender first appeared and everyone walked around twitching. It was really FUN in those days (apologies for nostalgic rambling).

I know the sort of reaction this letter will get, not from you, but from the high-scorers and millionaires who read your magazine. I am obviously out of touch because I can't find the three pieces of the ACG key (This is true, it's that damn mummy) and I give up when Thorin sits down . . . I wonder if they can even remember *The Hobbit*, yes, the one that was really good before you bought *Manic Miner*, remember?

I'm not going to slag off any games though . . . I like playing them and, if anything I feel disappointed when I clear the final screen or cross the last vast pit.

I've had my spectrum for longer than I can care to remember, originally purchased to play with (yes, I was young and rich once) when the only games were early QS and Silversoft attempts, laughable now by anyone's standards. In those days a game would be bought between a group, who would dutifully copy, swap and play it to death until the next game released (months later) would take its place. Even £4.95 seemed a bad deal in those days, and for what you got I suppose it was.

So, vid kids, make the most of daddy's wallet, I'll see you in the queue in a few years.

Music . . . The spectrum lacks in the sound department. This is an acknowledged fact, indeed, I only realised that mine had a speaker when I used it on a desk top instead of the carpet (subtle attempt at bland humour – don't use your spec on daddy's axminster, you could start a fire). Anyway, you've seen all those add-on speakers and things, well don't bother splashing out on them (even if daddy is willing), no . . . just buy a huge stereo system, stick your favourite Duran Duran album on and bop on down the dungeons.

Playing video games goes with loud music and vice-versa, in fact if it wasn't for the deafening roar that emitted from the early arcades (converted shops, etc.) I doubt if I ever would have bothered to investigate. As for adventure games, borrow one of daddy's Mendellsohn's and really get into the fell of it all (Thrilling, man).

Like I said, it's supposed to be FUN.

Playing Tips for the incurably addicted (Volume One).
1) When you buy a new game, do not rush home and plug it in immediately. Instead, walk about reading the inlay. Read it over and over again until all sorts of fantastic visions are racing around your head. Go home, sit down and read the paper. Allow yourself at least an hour before you actually 'Load up' the game. Believe me, it WILL be better.
2) Always have LOUD music playing. This serves more than just to disguise the feeble dribbling noises of the Spec (see above).
3) If the suspicion that the game you have been playing for the last six hours is becoming dull crosses your mind, immediately switch off and go for a long walk (or get hopelessly paralytic, it's up to you). When you eventually return to the game all should be well (hopefully).
4) If you really want to enjoy a game: save up and buy two or three at a time (Hypocrite am I not), that way you won't be likely to get home and spend the next few days hammering hell out of ONE game. The novelty of ONE new game doesn't take long to wear off in a long continuous sitting.

Playing Tips volume two: Buy CRASH magazine (Not even slightly subtle).

And now some incredibly interesting ideas (snore . . .).

Why not have a Top Ten of the WORST computer games? I've seen some that I am sure would be riding high in the charts . . . Ever played *Schizoids, Transylvanian Tower, Inca Curse, Monsters in Hell* . . . ? And those are only the BEST of the WORST . . . there are other unmentionable travesties that I fear to mention lest I become a figure of fun for having bought them in the first place.

I liked your CRASHBACK idea of old reviews, but were the remarks entirely honest? I'm not being silly, but even 5% addictiveness for *Maziacs* would be extremely generous. I enjoyed it immensely for a day. It isn't a BAD game, it's just Ummm – one of those things.

Oh, to the poet who mentioned *Cookie*, I'm afraid it isn't worth the price pal, you ought to get *JSW*, even if it is deliberately bugged.

As for *Manic Moron*, what can I say? Don't let your friends know that you have got it or they'll be queueing up outside for a quick bash (Quick bash: known to last until 3 a.m.).

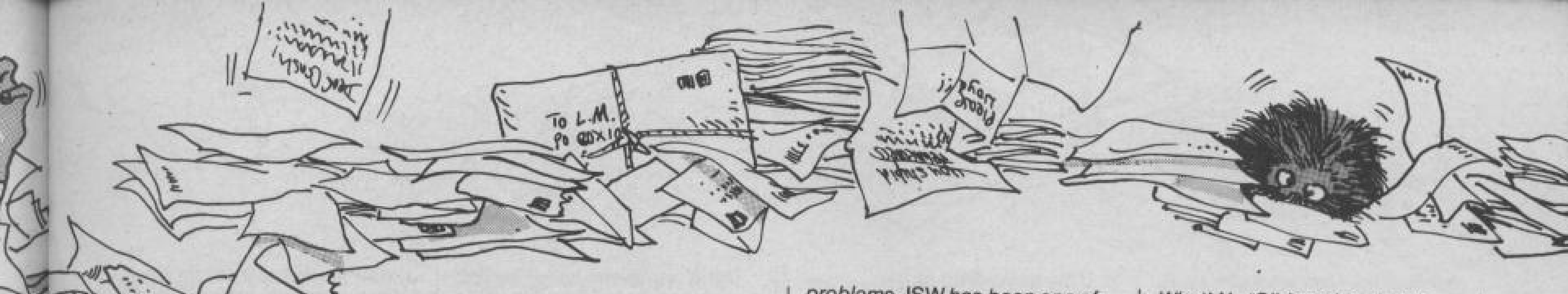
Also, if you use your Spec more for games than anything else (who doesn't?) then get a joystick. It really is the only way to play. Get a Kempston. If only because 99% of all Joystick compatible games run with a Kemp. And those programmable ones are too expensive and a liability if you change the connections more than twice (Experience).

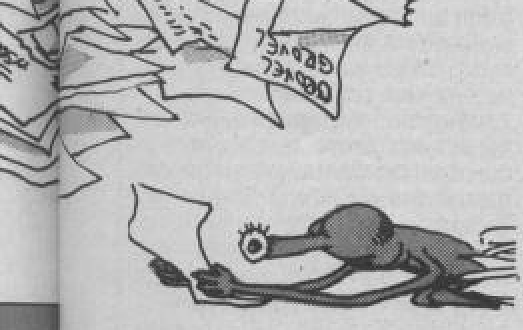
Sabre Wulf? I always thought it was a sabre toothed tiger in all the films, and since when did Jungle explorers carry swords? Couldn't he have a laser pistol, just to be different?

As for the horror stories involving faults, especially at Christmas time, the answer is simple: put a note out for santa, "Dear Santa, my Spec is up the creek. Give me a new one or I'll go on a reindeer meat diet for the next fifty years." If this fails, ask daddy nicely.

What is going to happen to the forthcoming mega-games from Imagine, now that they have waved bye-bye? Of course, I speak of *Psyclapse* and *Bunglesnitch* (?). Will another firm sell them? Will they be given away in Corn Flakes packets? Any ideas . . . ? And will *Schizoids* now become a much sought after, rare, collector's item? Somehow I doubt it. If anyone wants my *Schizoids* cassette, they can have it. You can have it for a CRASHBACK review if you like, no, I'll save you the trouble:







Game Title: Shitzoids
Use of computer: YES
Graphics: Nice cassette box picture
Playability: 0.5%
Getting started: You don't
Addictive qualities: You find an insatiable desire to smash the TV, mainly out of boredom and frustration at having spent the money on such utter dross.
Value for money: Go to TESCO
Overall: No comment.

As for the fact that you are raising the price of CRASH (No, I don't hold you yourself responsible) you really shouldn't worry about it, because all you are doing is moving up to a price which you so-called competitors (C&VG, Big K, Games Computing, etc.) have been selling at for ages. And for what CRASH is, the definitive spec-soft mag, there are no real competitors, are there?

After that blatant attempt at flattery I must also congratulate you on not including any space-wasting BASIC listings, the like of which abound in other magazines. I'd much rather read the excellent cartoon 'Terminal Man', which even makes Marvel comics look dull. Please don't ever print any listings . . . OK?



I acknowledge your plight in the 'lack of letter space' dept. but even if you edit all the pap out of this, I'm sure there are some reasonably interesting points that your readers would appreciate, well, maybe not the insulting bits at the start.

John W. Tapper (age 20)
Unemployed. Bored.
I'm serious about the reviews.

John W. Tapper (unemployed and 20), Garway, Hertfordshire.

There's not much I can add to that, John, except your choice is on its way.
LM

JADED AND DISGUSTED

Dear Mr. Mangram,
I bought my first issue of CRASH today (26/6/84) and was cheerfully persuing the pages when I got to page 100 and read the announcement that *Jet Set Willy* had some winners. I was crestfallen to say the least, but when I read the four POKEs in bold type I was utterly disgusted and appalled. The third POKE is the only one at all connected with the Attic. The first removes two aliens from the row of four in The Conservatory Roof; the fourth replaces the orange block in the group of blues with a blue block in The Banyan Tree. The second is quite interesting. If Z80 buffs examine their text of *Jet Set Willy* from 93D1-9455, and reset bit 7 in all the data from A4AD-A4FF, then number the order in which the rooms are stored (C000-FD00) from 00 (Off-Licence) to 3C (The Bow), they will discover how the items are stored, and that room 1C (First Landing) has an object; it is actually invisible, and resides above and to the left of the cross. What Messrs. Holman and Ebe have done is to move it to The Hall.

I was able to collect 83 out of 84 objects before Easter. I found out what happened when you jumped onto the bed around late March. (POKE 38207,40 – the result is unexpected and clears up the mystery of the loo). I didn't claim the prize through honesty.

The whole affair has left a sour taste. The ONLY way to win was to cheat. There is enough dishonesty in the business with piracy without introducing impossible games with big prizes. The winners would not be able to collect 84 objects with eight men, even with the Attic bug sorted out. I could not contact Software Projects as I would instantly lay myself on the rack for disassembly, I thought.

You may think I'm a sore hypocrite; maybe I am, but there are a thousand others all over the country on my side in what should have been a massive controversy. Please prove I'm on my own in thinking this is unfair – for the good of this thriving industry.
J. D. (Jaded Bytes), St. Day, Redruth, Cornwall.

I reckon that's pretty fair comment, and it would be interesting to see what Software Projects have to say to you. In general, I know that there's always a lot of pressure to get a game released on time, and JSW was certainly very late being finished, having been heavily advertised and anticipated. In these circumstances it is easier to see how a program can be rushed out when in reality it hasn't been properly debugged. Interesting, too, that despite its problems JSW has been one of the most played and enduringly popular games ever released for the Spectrum.
LM

CURIOUS

Dear Lloyd,
I am very curious to know why it takes solong for CRASH to review games such as C.D.S. *Pool*, which have been available for months before being reviewed. If you reviewed games when they first came out, it would help a lot of people who buy games that look good but are rubbish and stop a lot of people from wasting their money.
Shane Crawford, Kinnross-Shire, Scotland

If you had read the piece in the review of C.D.S. Pool*, you would have noticed that it carefully said that the game had been released long before CRASH came on the scene, but it was being reviewed because C.D.S. were giving it a new push with a newly designed cover. In most cases CRASH is usually the first out with either a review, or at least a preview, of new games, at least where software houses can be bothered to send copies for review in time.*
LM

UPGRADER

Dear CRASH,
I would like to point out to Alan Bates of Grimsby (Letter of the Month, Issue 7) that I, too, upgraded from 16K to 48K using a D.I.Y. kit from Fox Electronics. After spending just over £20 and a wait of three weeks, it took me less than half an hour to install. I



have also successfully installed the same kit for two friends in about a quarter of an hour.

If the space is so precious in the letters section of the mag, then why not get rid of all the CRASH 'bugs' and print more letters instead?
Simon White, Wotton-under-Edge, Glos.

What! No 'Oli-bugs' as they're affectionately known in the CRASH office? Seriously, though, there has to be some attempt made to make pages look lively. All printing on a page would look very heavy. Besides, 'precious space' is also a consideration of how much I'm allowed to spend on typesetting which is quite costly! Be fair, Simon, CRASH has about the longest letters section in any magazine you'll read. The next writer also has a comment to make about our pages . . .

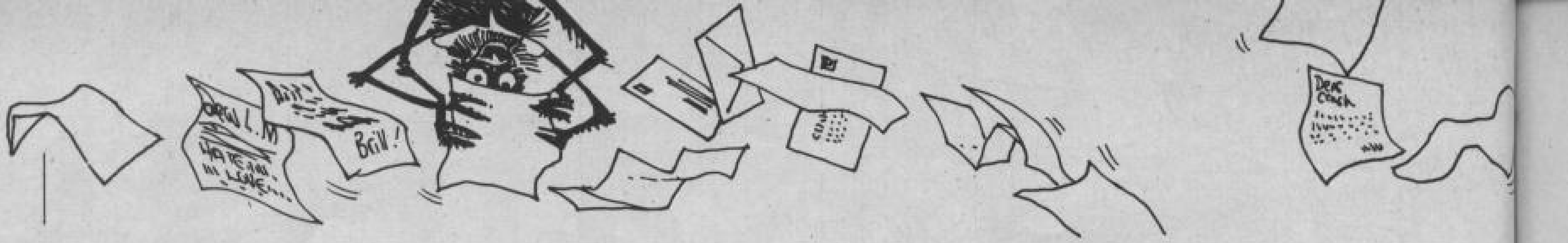
GLOSSIER BUT . . .

Dear Lloyd,
Your magazine is getting better with every issue, yet I still long to see a completely glossy issue. Going through past copies reveals a growing number of glossy pages, but they still fail to cover a complete issue. It's only a small quibble in what otherwise holds the position of being the only magazine I actually buy without first flicking through. I admire the way you appear so down-to-earth and matter of fact, also freely admitting your mistakes, printing critical letters as well as appraisals.

Just a couple more points before I finish. Why can't our amazing 'games cheats' disassemble a few other programs other than *Jet Set Willy* and *Manic Miner*? I've tried, but fail to get a grip on machine code. And I'd love to have an infinite lives POKE on *Moon Alert*, for example. Mark Harvey should become Poet Lauréat, too.
Tim Keen, Rugby, Warwicks.

Looking at our JSW/MM POKEs file, Tim, I can't help but agree with you! I think an infinite lives for Moon Alert *will be printed in the Christmas Special. Now to the paper (I seem to be asking for loads of financial breakdowns recently!); lots of readers assume – and why not? – that a magazine is rather effortlessly put together each month, with loads ofpaying ads in it to get in the way of the real stuff, sells at a highish price and so makes loads and loads of money for all concerned. I wish it were so! In fact it is a constant battle to ensure that each issue makes its money back and some profit over (without which new ideas could not be developed easily). An average issue of CRASH costs £18,000 for colour origination, typesetting and printing (on top of that comes a load of other costs, like my pitiful salary). Of these costs, the paper perissue costs almost £9,000 – so as you can see, paper is a big problem. By mixing paper types carefully it is possible to shave as much as £2,000 off an issue's cost. To have all glossy paper in CRASH would certainly add on another £2-3,000. Sorry to be so*





detailed, but I just want you to know that we're not being mean for the sake of it!
LM

SOLD OUT!

Dear CRASH,
I am writing to tell you about some back numbers I got this morning: on opening the polythene-clad parcel and inspecting the magazines, I thought, 'I've been done, doze guys at a da CRASH office av nicked one a me books.' And that disheartened me.

On reading through I found a letter of apology and a pound note. That's OK I thought, but the letter said that No. 1 CRASH was completely sold out, and will no longer be available. Is this true? I will never see number 1 CRASH. Please try to reprint No. 1 to make the set.
Kevin Hole, Shildon, Co. Durham.



Sorry, Kev, itsa da truth. Issue number 1 has all gone, every last copy sold. It could be reprinted if some 30,000 others want one (less than that wouldn't be worthwhile – see above!), but I don't think that's verylikely, do you? (By the way, thanks for the map – we'll probably be using it later on).
LM

CONGRATULATIONS!

Dear CRASH,
Due to a special offer from P.S.S. I sent off for a game called *Frank N. Stein* and I feel I must congratulate them on what I think is a great game. I throughly recommend it as it has 50 screens and is veryplayable. It comes packed in a special box like *Sabre Wulf*. Well done P.S.S.

Simon Wright who claims to have got to L99 on Lunar Jetman (cough!) must have a faulty copy because after L30, earth is saved and the game finishes.
John Hodkinson, Sutton Coldfield, W. Midlands.

Well, naughty old Simon!
LM

IGNORE AT YOUR PERIL!

Dear Lloyd,
The other day my friend bought *Deep Space* by Kryptonic. For the money paid (£1.99) it was excellent value. Aha, I thought, these cheap games are not all bad. Soon I was walking to the shop clutching ten pounds. After a great deal of Umming and Ah-ing I bought *Voyage Into The Unknown*. Oh woe, woe, why did I ignore CRASH? In the end I took it back to the shop and exchanged it for *Hopper* by Kryptonic. It is brilliant value and is one of the most addictive games in my collection. So, be warned. The moral of this story is (as Confucius would say) 'Man who ignore CRASH, comes unstuck'!" **William Buckingham, Fakenham, Norfolk.**

P.S. Why don't you print loading times in your Comments section in the reviews?

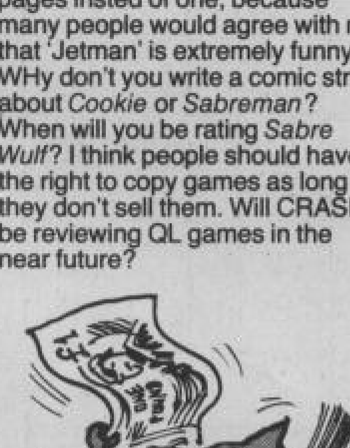
We would print loading times if anyone could remember to time them in the rush to get everything written up!
LM

THE £1 BET

Dear lloyd,
I would first like to say that I think your magazine is great. I am a avid fan of CRASH, I hope I shall be in years to come. Since I have taken the mag to school, I have converted 7 people to order CRASH.

I would like to list my own top 10 of Spectrum games: 1) Sabre Wulf, 2) The Hobbit, 3) Jet Set Willy, 4) Hulk, 5) Ad Astra, 6) Fighter Pilot, 7) TLL, 8) Doomsday Castle, 9) Trashman, 10) 3D Deathchase.

Please could you make the cartoon strip 'Jetman' span two pages insted of one, because many people would agree with me that 'Jetman' is extremely funny. WHy don't you write a comic strip about *Cookie* or *Sabreman*? When will you be rating *Sabre Wulf*? I think people should have the right to copy games as long as they don't sell them. Will CRASH be reviewing QL games in the near future?



There is only one thing I beg of you: please could you tell me how to turn on the light in *Mad Martha*.

My friend bet me £1 that I would not get my letter printed. Please could you prove him wrong for once.
Martin R. Kelly, Vale, Lancaster

I'd hate to think of you missing out on a crisp pount note, Martin! Thanks for your conversion work at school – keep it up. As to 'Jetman', that's rather up to the editorial people and Ultimate who actually have the strip drawn. Is there any point rating Sabre Wulf now? There's a lack of logic in your argument about copying games. Clubs have been the worst offenders where they often make hundreds of copies without ever selling any of them, and therefore do terrible damage to the industry. I've actually forgotten about Mad Martha (so long ago!), but get dummy from bathroom and putdummy in baby's mouth, then you can take oil lamp and go downstairs to fill it. The match doesn't seem to come into it as far as lighting the lamp goes. Any help? As to the QL – where are the games?

The Software Piracy File questionnaire has resulted in loads of forms coming back already. Keep it up. A lot of them have been very, very honest. Here's a letter which accompanied one form . . .

PIRACY

Dear Letter reading Lloyd,
I am writing about pirates. I am one myself, and everyone I know who has a computer, pirates software. It cannot be stopped, but can be scaled down so not so much pirating is going on. But I must point out that it is the software houses' fault for having such high prices. I would not dare buy a game and keep it! I would buy it, copy it and take it back to the shop and change it for another one, then copy that and flog it for half the price. So in the end I am getting two games for about £3 to £3.50. Great value.

They say on ITV's Database programme that a new anti-copying device is available, but I expect no one will be able to stop a mass of Spectrum pirates from copying software. The prices are too high. In Debenhams my mate and I were looking at Spectrum software when we found one of the cassette cases actually had a tape inside it (*Bear Bovver*). So I said to him, 'Nick that for me and I'll give you 50p for it now, and an extra 25p it it works.' He stole it and it worked. I found it was a bit like 'Panic' and didn't like it. And to think, some poor fella would pay £7 for it. So in my words, software is a rip off unless prices come down.
C. Jones, address witheld by request.

The writer is to be commended for his frankness, if not his honesty! In fact I'm a bit surprised by how frank many writers have been on this subject (or perhaps it just reflects the fact that readers see CRASH as hovering somewhere between 'underground' magazine, and facist trade press, due to the constant political tussle between myself and He Who Is To Be Obeyed – and therefore feel like airing their views). The next writer is pretty much to the point . . .
LM

Dear Mr. Mangram,
This is another letter about software piracy, but, unlike some other letters you have printed, this one tells the truth about the situation.



I am one of these 'pirates' but I am pleased you made the distinction in your questionnaire between commercial and home copying. Personally, I believe home copying is relatively harmless and so widespread that to stop, or try to stop this, would without doubt fail; but that commercial copying is extremely evil and damaging to both the software companies and the home copiers, who are often put in the same category as these 'Arfur Daleys' of the computer world.

I will now tell a story about how a new game is acquired; a boy goes into school and sees another boy coming towards him, who he knows owns a Spectrum. He says, 'Hello Fred. I got *Chuckie Egg* off a mate of mine the other day – do you wan' it?'

The other boy (both being Spectrum owners) says, 'Yeah. What d'ya want for it?'

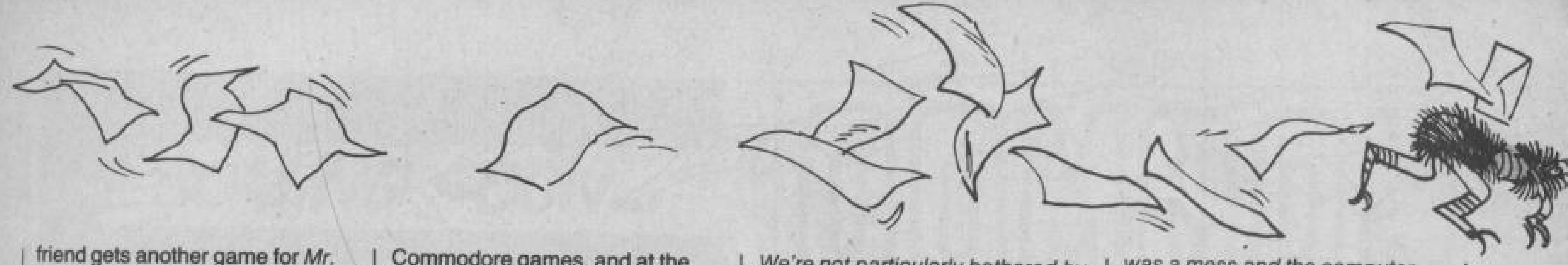
Fred says, 'Have you got *Android 2*, John?'

John says, 'No, but I've got *Mr. Wimpy!*'

Fred says, 'Oh, then bring us a blank tape tomorrow and I'll do you a copy.'
John agrees and they part company. A couple of days later when Fred has *Mr. Wimpy* and John has *Chuckie Egg*, Fred goes to another friend who doesn't know John and swaps another game for *Mr. Wimpy*.

They do a deal and Fred's





friend gets another game for *Mr. Wimpy*, and all the while this has been happening, John has been getting games for *Chuckie Egg*.

The point I am trying to make is this; if somebody only makes two or three copies of a game to swap, then these copies will in turn be swapped, and so it goes on, until, in reality, there are fifteen or more copies stemming from one original and not less.

After a while, when everybody where you live has a copy of a certain game, the game that started all these copies has ended its working life as its owner can't swap it for anything. As an example, if you were trying to get a game off somebody then *Jet Set Willy* or *Wheelie* would not aid the bargaining power of the person as everybody, at least where I live, has a copy of *JSW* or *Wheelie*. What's more, I only know one person with an original (shop-bought) copy of *Jet Set Willy* – so perhaps my previous estimate of 15 to 1 for pirated copies is a bit conservative.

In my area at the moment (written 1st September) the best games to have for swaps are *Antics, Codename Mat, Krakatoa, Full Throttle* and *Matchpoint*. With any of these games you could get two of last month's games (incidentally, I have copies of all these)!

You may have noticed in my list that all the games are very recent, which is a major factor as only a few people have these games, thus putting you in a top bargaining position. Most people I know consider it a matter of pride toonly buy games, say, once a month, and of course, the quicker you get a copy of a new game, the higher up you are in the pirating fraternity, and you have a larger choice of games to swap your newly copied (smash hit) game for!

A commonly held misconception is that home pirates never buy games. This is definitely **not** true. All in all I have spent about £80 on games, but these only count for a fraction of my collection of 150 or more games.

Onto commercial piracy. Spectrum software companies have been making a lot of fuss about this and rightly so, but I have deliberately been talking to owners of other machines to tell CRASH readers about this form of theft.

Due to the extortionate price of Atari software (between £25 and £35) a lot of Atari owners are only too happy to pay £5 for a copy. As Spectrum software is only an average of £5 to £6, relatively cheap, it makes Spectrum software less of a target for commercial rip-off copiers. There are only a few Commodore games worth ripping-off, so the problem doesn't apply!

If you look at an all-computer software chart, it goes to prove what I am saying. Most of the top games are for the Spectrum, lower down come the good Commodore games, and at the bottom are the fringe machines like the poseur's Beeb, and the poseur-with-less-money's machine – the Electron. Right down are scattered a few Atari games, which are indeed excellent – why aren't more Atari games being sold? Because of commercial piracy. I was looking at the software collection of my Atari-owning friends and didn't see even one original! No wonder Atari are in trouble.

The moral of this story is this: Spectrum software companies should feel lucky – your games reach number one and sell in five figure numbers, and that your so-called piracy problem is about as small as available memory in a Beeb in hi-res mode, and that if the so-called Spectrum piracy problem did exist so seriously then A) Spectrum games wouldn't take nine out of the top ten places in the charts, and B) there wouldn't be so many whining software companies as they would all have gone bust.

This letter is really to encourage all Spectrum owners who don't buy many games to change their selfish ways and splash out every week or so on a game that doesn't crash or need a self adjusting cassette machine to load – i.e. buy originals if only for your own good, as with more money, software companies make better games, so in the long run, the games player, benefits immeasurably.

Andrew J. Wray (15), Harpenden, Herts.



The Software Piracy File Questionnaire will be collated and the results will be in next month's issue. It should make intersting reading!
LM

A BIT POINTLESS?

Dear Lloyd,
I would like to point out that *Sabre Wulf* maps have already appeared in other magazines, so it seems rather likely that many entries will be copied solely from these and the game will be left unexplored – surely the aim of your map competition.

D. Naylor, Huby, Leeds.

We're not particularly bothered by other magazines publishing the Sabre Wulf *maps – it seemed inevitable that they would. Since CRASH appeared all the games oriented mags have been getting jumpy about being first in with everything. Ultimate asked us to run a competition similar to the* Atic Atac *one and that meant foregoing being first in with a map, naturally. Besides, I don't think we would ever print a review of a game plus its map – when half the fun of the game is finding your way around it. The idea of the map competition is not actually exploring the game, but producing an accurate AND ARTISTICALLY drawn map. Obvious copies from either PGC or C&VG will go in the bin I'm afraid.*

Going back to the subject of upgrades, here's a warning letter from one reader who found the business traumatic . . .
LM

RIPPED OFF

Dear Lloyd,
In your issue 7 I read the letter by Alan Bates about upgrading. I have had an even worse experience. I sent my Spectrum for an upgrade in May 1983 to **INTERACTIVE INSTRUMENTS Ltd.** When it was returned it was not in working order. I have since returned it twice but both times it came back broken. I sent it away for the fourth time and haven't seen it since. I have tried to contact them many times but just get excuses, until a few months ago they said they would give me compensation, which I have never seen. They have moved address. I enclose some details about my plight. If you can't help me in my compensation then I hope this will persuade anyone not to have anything to do with Interactive Instruments. I have since bought another Spectrum despite having lost £150.

Dale Ballinger, Cashes Green, Stroud, Glos.

Dale enclosed the sales invoice from Interactive Instruments Ltd., as well as details of his and his father's communications with the upgrading company. The sales invoice is one of those 'off-the-shelf' jobs with no address filled in, but only a VAT number. I tried tracing the company through their VAT number, and the Customs and Excise office replied that to their knowledge the company was still trading.

Interactive Instruments Ltd., of Pilot House, King Street, Leicester are unobtainable as their telephone has been disconnected, and according to one member of the Leicester software fraternity, the company has gone bust owing lots of money to customers like Dale. This same person also sent a Spectrum to them for upgrade and told me that the resultant job was a mess and the computer didn't work. The company director that the Ballingers were trying to talk to was a Mr. Taylor, who seems to have been unable to cope with the matter over an extraordinary long period of time. If VAT are correct and Interactive Instruments Ltd. are still in business, then it's time they stopped acting like crooks, but I suspect anyone who is still waiting for their machines or compensation is going to have a long and probably fruitless wait.
LM

ON ORIGINALITY

Dear CRASH,
I am writing to you on the controversial subject of your reviewers and arcade games. On the whole the reviewers are good, and certainly the most imformative of any magazine (really!), but when it comes to actual arcade video machines, their knowledge is somewhat lacking.

For starters, Micromania are quite wrong – *Kosmic kanga* is not a 'totally original game' but an almost exact copy of the pretty old



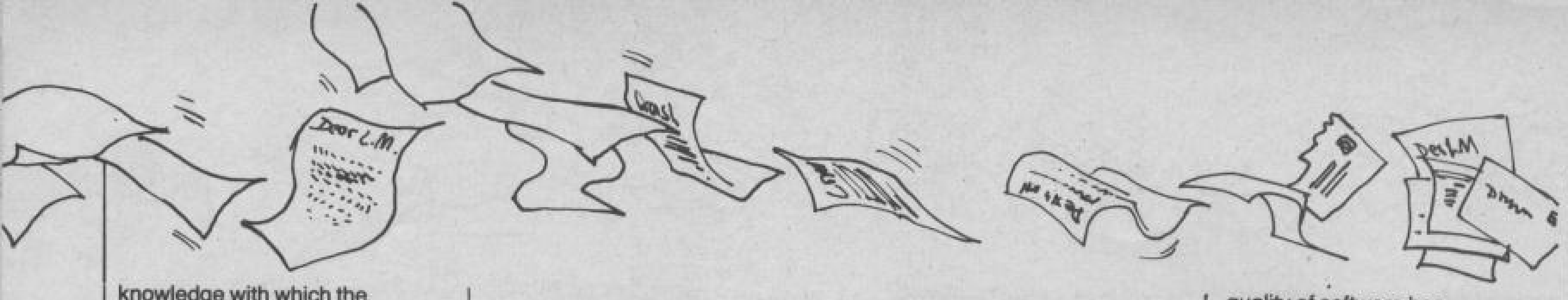
arcade game 'Jump Bug'. This game is not uncommon, and any self-respecting games player should have at least seen this game, but not one of your reviewers (who are professionals or a sort) mentioned this fact.

Also, in the review of *Full Throttle*, it was stated that it as a 'Pole Position' like game – but even better because the road actually moved left and right across the screen instead of staying fixed in the centre of the screen.' A quick 10p game in practically any amusement arcade in the country would show the reviewer that the road actually moves more and far better than the reviewer thinks.

A far more serious error was made by the reviewer who stated that, *The Birds and The Bees* has a 'Scramble' style radar screen. Please inform this reviewer that there really is a difference between Scramble and Defender!

Still, on the positive side, they did not make the mistake a Home Computing Weekly reviewer made, stating that Anirog's *Missile Defence* (a Missile Command game) was another version of Space Invaders!

To conclude, all I ask is that, as specialists, the reviewers find out more about their specialty subject. A little more background



knowledge with which the Spectrum copies can be compared with the originals would improve the reviews no end.
Nick Page, (address separated from letter – sorry).

These are all fair points to make, but I think you are treating the Spectrum reviews in far too literal a manner, Nick. It's true that Kosmic Kanga *is not original in the general sense, but it is for the Spectrum. The remark about 'Pole Position' like games refers to the arcade original (which even isolated CRASH reviewers have seen!) but to those copies of the original already translated to the Spectrum, which don't move as well as can be seen in* Full Throttle. *You are of course quite right about the mix up between Scramble and Defender – just a regrettable slip of the tongue I suspect. I wonder, however, whether there's much to be gained from trying to compare arcade originals with Spectrum copies – I know we do do it – but Spectrum games are a thing of their own. As a matter of fact, most of our young reviewers do get to see plenty of video machines, but you might be surprised to know that once out of a big city, it isn't very easy to see many games this way! The annual Ludlow May Fair tends to be the best opportunity if you don't travel to wicked places like Birmingham.*
LM

It was a pleasant surprise to be handed down the following letter which was sent to Roger Kean by **Boris Allan** *who writes the* **Ziggurat** *column in Popular Computing weekly . . .*

OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dear Editor,
I found CRASH September, 1984 very interesting, especially your Editorial in which you mention my **Ziggurat** article about Imagine and their lack of imagination. Since writing that Ziggurat I have thought more about the topic, and I would like to make the following points:

1. I was asked by a friend, who runs a software business, if I could recommend a machine code programmer for a full-time inhouse post. He told me that when Imagine crashed he was inundated by out of work Imagine people: he had not found any remotely suitable. Perhaps that is significant? I think so.
2. When I commented on 'serious' software, I said that what counts as serious or useful varies tremendously with the individual: in making that statement I was consciously not excluding games. In the September issue you review *White Lightning* which is a game orientated product, but which I consider as serious (or more serious) than most of the (generally tatty) educational software that appears.
3. As someone is interested in the 'history' of micros, the most interesting regular in CRASH is *CRASHBACK*, because it shows how views change – in the September issue the ratings of *Alchemist* were dropped – a good idea. I never liked *Alchemist* as it seemed rather unimaginative, slightly different but exceedingly boring. I think that most people ended up feeling the same, and who produced it?

I am not sure what conculsions one can draw from this mishmash of observations, but – as you implied in your editorial – the media has to take some of the blame for not being sufficiently critical of both the claims and the game.
Boris Allan, Bramhall, Stockport.

Last month I published two letters from readers who had complained that *3D Bat Attack* by Cheetah Soft had originally appeared as a program listing in *Your Computer* magazine. A spokesman for Cheetah Soft has asked me to say in reply that the listing which appeared in the February 1984 issue of Your Computer and the program contents of *3D Bat Attack* are not the same, and that in fact the listing as printed was inoperable as a program because there were significant pieces missing from it which the author had not realised at the time. Cheetah Soft, however, were impressed with the idea and asked the programmer to rewrite the game, making a number of revisions to the originally printed version in *Your Computer* so that they could market it. So *3D Bat Attack* has been completely revised and is not the same program that appeared in *Your Computer* back in February.
LM

Just before closing the issue I was dubiously delighted to receive this letter from a spokesperson for a well known software house . . .



FROM THE DESK OF GRAHAM STAFFORD (DESIGN DESIGN)

Dear Barclay, Midland, Nat, Lloyd or whatever your name is,

I would like to express my views on a number of subjects raised in the letters column of Cwash, as challenged in the best ever issue of that most wonderful magazine of yours. (The one wot's got me in!)

On the subject of piracy, a number of letters have been published, which I feel have left several points uncovered. As I stated in our interview, and I feel this is the view of the majority of software houses, software swopping in playgrounds, etc. is something that will always be with us, and is beyond the scope of any realistic form of legislation. However, commercial piracy can be curbed by effective government legislation. The commercial pirate is out to exploit the buying public, by producing software of sub-standard quality (failure to load, corruptions, badly printed instructions, etc.). Not only does this steal a company's revenue, as well as the programmer's but it has a detrimental effect on a company's reputation.

To preserve revenue, both company and programmer will naturally use measures to try and stop 'playground piracy', such as special loaders etc. If you are going to pirate a tape you should at least have to put some time and effort into it!

It is a widely held belief that the price of software is too high and the reduction of prices would lead to a reduction in piracy. This is not so, there are as many pirate copies of 'budget' software as of convential software.

In answer to Paul Watts, you don't see Imagine's directors riding on custom built bikes, at least not any more you don't. The greatly exaggerated claims of companies like Imagine have led the buying public into believing that the software business is full of people earning vast quantities of money and doing very little for it. This is not the case! The software industry is not the boom industry it is portrayed as being. The number of companies that have gone into liquidation is an indication of this, usually the extravagant companies are those to go first.

This brings me on to Anthony Dyson's letter in the same issue of Cwash, one which raises some very valid points. Over the last year, and especially since the appearance of 'budget' software, it has become less profitable for a writer toproduce a large quantity of sub-standard games. The quality of software has undoubtedly got better as a greater amount of time is required to reach present market standards, another reason why software prices have not fallen.

My final serious note is that software writers and companies went into the software industry to make an honest living, not to make money by false pretences; this is what a commercial pirate does.

On to the less serious side of this letter, yes there is one, has anybody mapped *Halls of the Things* yet? My high score on 'Halls' is 2873. I completed it about six months after first being confronted by the damn thing(s). I'd also like some answers to the following questions: –

Is Lloyd Mangram paranoid?
Why can't anybody at Wudlow spell Cwash properly?
Why is Manchester wet?
Who are Rainbow Software?
Does anybody really care?

So please before you pirate one of the games like wot I wrote, spare a thought for me, sitting at a word processor in Manchester, wondering whether I can afford the Petrol for my Audi, Simon's Lotus Turbo and Neil's XR4i (joke).

Yours semi-seriously,
Gwaham Stafford of Design Design (used to be Cwystal).

P.S. If Paul Watts (Illfracombe, Devon) would like to see how a software house really works, he would be welcome here anytime (061-205-6603).

It's okay for you with your Audi Quatros, Lotus Turbos and a company fleet of XR4is – joke indeed! As to my paranoia only my psychiatrist can comment (although I was born under a dark star), and as for the rest of your letter, I think it speaks for itself very nicely. Thank you Gwaham.
LM



Well that's about all for this month. Oli-bugs notwithstanding. I've run out of allowable space. We try to get round to as many leters as possible each month, but even those that get missed out may turn up if they're relevant the following month, and anyway, all your comments to get read and inwardly digested (the doctors are busy round Ludlow)! PLEASE, HOWEVER, DO NOT enclose any mail order forms or money in mail to myself or competitions in the magazine, because the mail doesn't get opened every single day, and your orders may go missing, be separated from the only address perhaps, and certainly get delayed. But keep writing in!
LM





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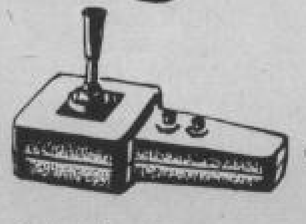
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KERRASH! N·E·W·S



The Virgin Games gang (from left to right) Ian Mathais, Jeremy Cook, Pat Mitchell, Dave Chapman, Andy Wilson, Steve Webb, Angela Fitzgerald and Nick Alexander.

A FRESH VIRGIN

Scorning the apparent paradox inherent in giving a virgin a second chance, **Virgin Games** is going into Christmas with a fresh start. 'We have changed with the market,' says Managing Director Nick Alexander. 'The shot-gun approach won't work any more.' Gone, it seems, are the days of releasing huge numbers of titles in the hope that some of them will be hits. Instead a more selective approach has been adopted. First out for the Spectrum is strangleloop (Reviewed in this issue) which has a £2000 robot for a prize riding on its competition. A later release will be *The Biz*, described as the ultimate computer game for the frustrated rock star. Written by **Chris Sievey** of the Freshies, who had a number of real life hits including 'I'm In Love With The Girl On The Virgin Manchester Megastore Checkout Desk', the game is said to contain 'almost too much realism'.

The new games come with a new look in cassette cases with transparent backs so that the cover wraps around more like a book. The inlays are more straightforward and less hyped than previous ones in keeping with Virgin's new tongue-in-cheek publicity (which is costing £1/4m nevertheless).



Virgin Games prestigious new headquarters. Virgin operates from a series of offices dotted all over London's Portobello Road area. As you can see, this is one of the more elegant

FRENCH IS MORE FUN

Following the release of *French is Fun* and *German is Fun*, **C.D.S. Micro Systems** have produced an audio cassette which is synchronised to run with both of the programs. The audio cassette is designed to aid correct pronounciation of the words and phrases contained in the two programs. It costs £3.50 on its own, or you can buy a three-pack containing *French – German is Fun* plus the audio cassette for £12.99, a saving of £2.41 over the individual prices of the three items.



FRONT RUNNER

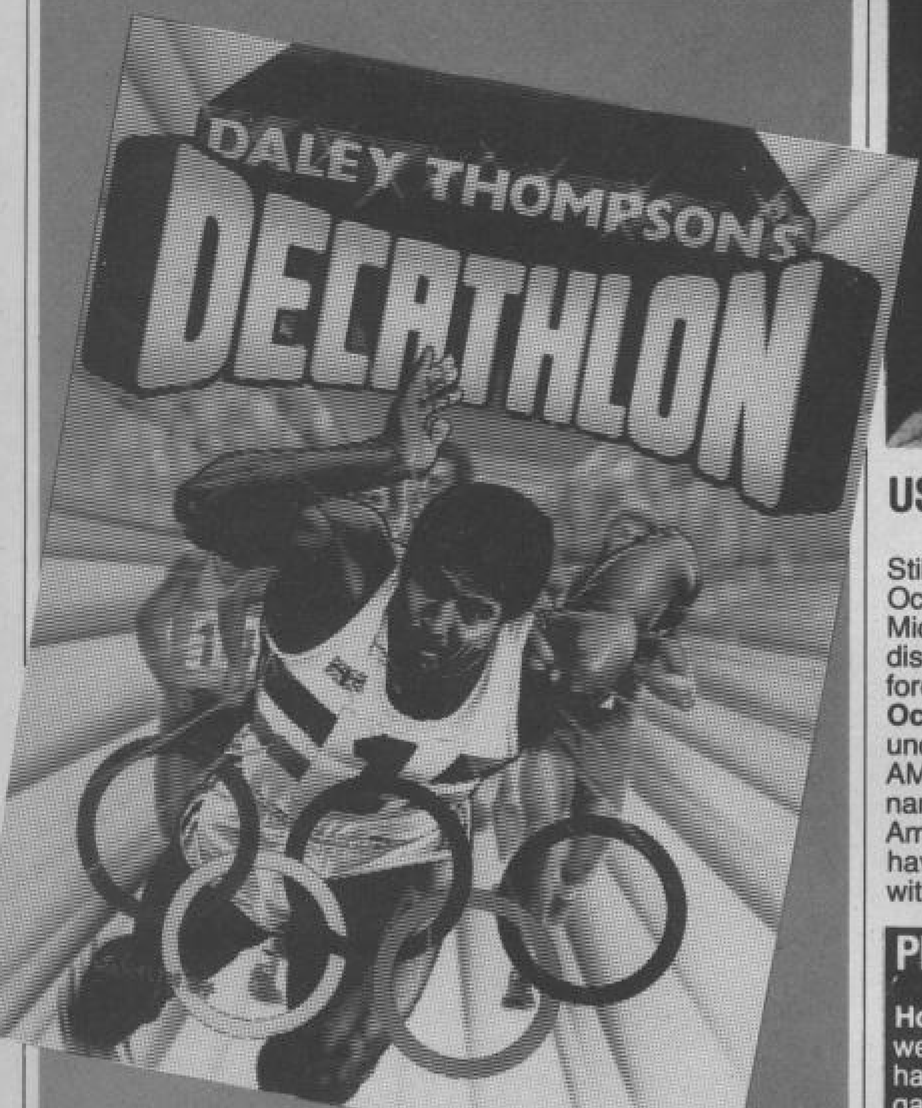
Marketing giants **K-Tel** have announced major new plans to handle the production and distribution for a number of software houses both UK based and abroad. This move follows their launch into games software last year, and a period of considerable investment in researching and analysing market trends, they say. Let's hope their extensive research has taken into account the somewhat less than marvellous games released by them for the Spectrum. Part of the reshuffle includes renaming their own software division – **Front Runner.** K-Tel have not announced yet whether they will be launching any Spectrum games, although *Star Warrior*, thought to be for the Commodore, is due about now.



Clockwise from the top: Jon Woods and David Ward directors of Ocean with Anne and Geoff Brown directors of Centre Soft.

US GOLD FOR BRITAIN

Still on the subject of Gold and Ocean, **Centre Soft,** the West Midlands software distributors, have joined forces with Manchester-based **Ocean** to import, manufacture under licence and market AMerican software under the name of **US Gold.** Ten leading American software houses have already signed contracts with US Gold. A lot of the games already out have been for the Commodore, but US Gold intends releasing Spectrum games as well which should shortly include Commodore hits like *Beachhead*. More as soon as we know.



POST-OLYMPICS

It may have been exquisite timing that CRASH received its preview copy of *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, the day after he secured the Gold at Los Angeles, but perhaps it just fell out that way. What would Ocean have done had the decathlete failed in his Olympics attempts (unlikely, but possible)? Unfortunately the preview copy was for the Commodore, and at the time of writing the Spectrum version has only just appeared for review.

The 10 decathlon events are all played under Olympic qualifying standards and are designed to destroy any joystick in a short time. On the Spectrum version (written by **Dan Hartley, Paul Owens** and **Christian Urquhart**) you compete against the computer. The game is £6.90 with royalties going to the British Amateur Athletic Board. Ocean has also announced *Hunchback II* for future release.

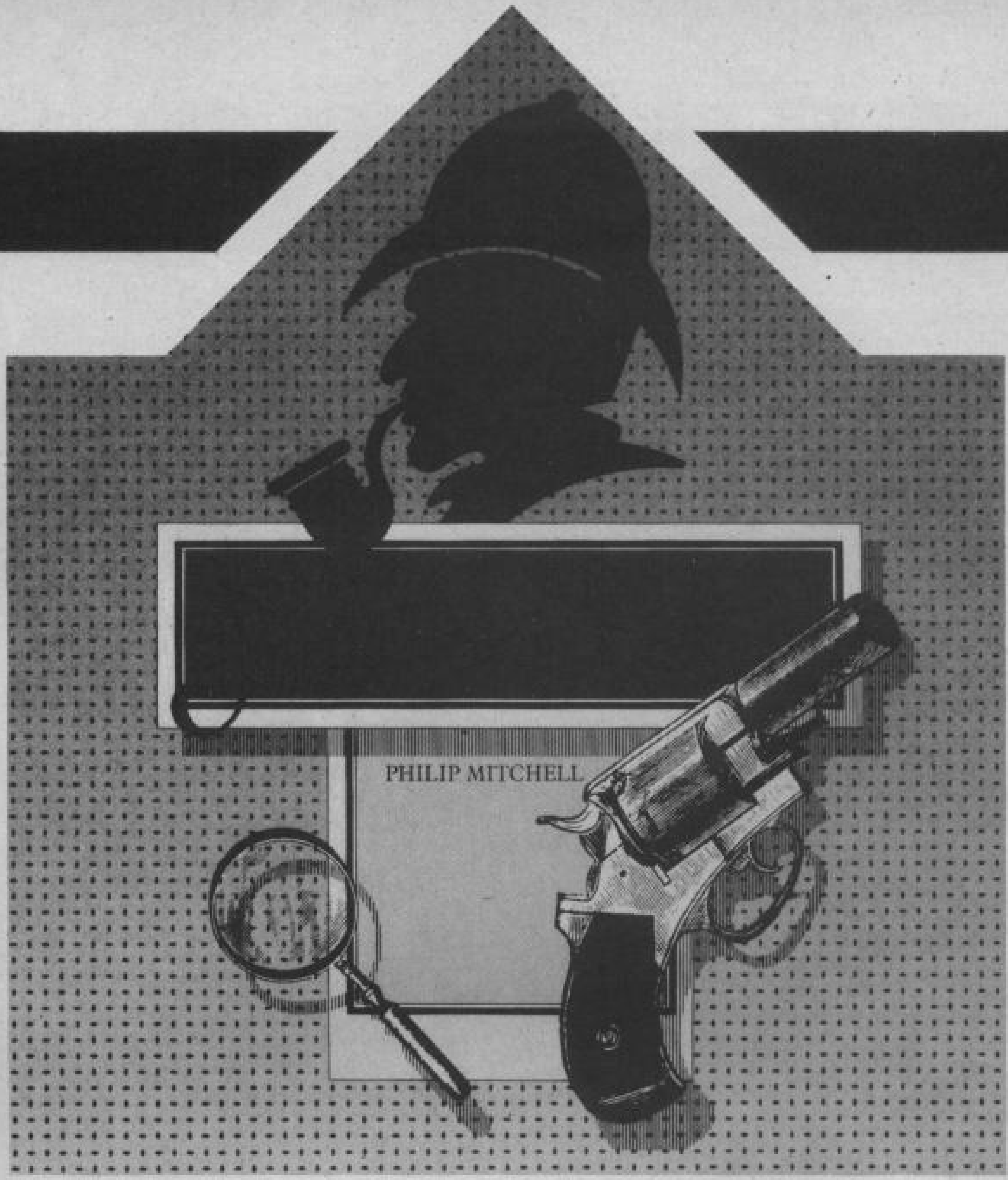
PETER PAN

Hodder and Stoughton the well known book publishers have moved into computer games, kicking off with an adventure called *Peter Pan – The Adventure.* Described as a sophisticated interactive adventure game, *Peter Pan* tests the wits of the player against pirates, indians and wild beasts in the fantasy world of the Neverland. It comes packaged with a paperback edition of the book. Hodder and Stoughton have been associated with Peter Pan from the beginning, as they were the original publishers of the book. Its author, **J.M. Barrie,** left the copyright of Peter Pan to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, London and a royalty on the adventure game, as on all Peter Pan books, goes to this cause.



SHERLOCK AT LAST!

Exhibiting a most uncharacteristic lack of punctuality, the great British detective has at last arrived from Australia in the new megadventure from **Melbourne House** – *Sherlock* (reviewed in this month's Adventure Trail). The programming team led by **Philip Mitchell** has been at work for over 15 months in an attempt to hop over *The Hobbit* and create another landmark in computer adventuring. The backgrounds and location descriptions are true to their period, right down to the steam trains on London's Underground. Anyone who doubts the authenticity of this point should take a trip to Baker Street station (District and Circle Line platforms) which has been recently cleaned up and clearly shows the huge sloping vents used to release the smoke and fumes from the platform. *Sherlock* costs £14.95.



DANGERMOUSE SCOOP

Readers wanting to know why CRASH hasn't had a review of *Dangermouse* yet may be interested to hear that we haven't yet had a preview copy of the game ('yet' is the 5th September). The reason behind this would appear to be that **Creative Sparks,** producers of *Dangermouse* (the game) have been employing what might be called 'cross-magazine diplomacy' in the CRASH was given *Blackhawk* and *Stagecoach* as 'exclusives' while Computer & Video Games got *Dangermouse*.

Dangermouse in Double Trouble, released in early October, costs £6.95 and for that money will pit you, the greatest secret agent in the world, against the villainous, megalomaniac toad Baron Silas Greenback and offers a competition to the most skilled players who could win a trip to the Cosgrave/Hall studios to meet the creators of *Dangermouse*. The transport will be by Rolls Royce and helicopter. A review of *Dangermouse* will appear in the next issue.



THE EDGE

Softek's Managing Director, **Tim Langdell,** has issued a mysterious press release on behalf of **The Edge** – described as the 'creative group' which has broken away from Softek International. Langdell says, 'Over the past few months I had been bringing together some of the best talent worldwide to form a unique group of programmers, graphic artists and musicians. Clearly Softek's game creation and marketing division had grown immensely in the first half of 1984. The creative group requested to be able to form an independent division of Softek.'

Quite how this creative group squeezed into Softek International's tiny two-room offices in London is a matter open to question – the latest in space compaction techniques no doubt. Anyway, they seem to have been busy getting *Personal Computer Games* game of the month award for their Commodore game *Quo Vadis,* and more amazingly entering the *Computer & Video Games* Hall of Fame pages before releasing the Spectrum game *Starbike.* These two games are described by The Edge as megagames – the first ever, and with a follow up title of *Psytraxx,* Softek and The Edge are beginning to sound a little like a Liverpool giant. Let's hope Softek doesn't go right over The Edge.

NAME CHANGE

A number of software houses recently seem to have been changing their names from one thing to another – whether to confuse them or us is not known. Latest to jump on the bandwagon and cover its tracks is **Computer Rentals Limited (C.R.L.)** who, with fiendish cunning, has disguised itself under the new name of **CRL Group PLC.**

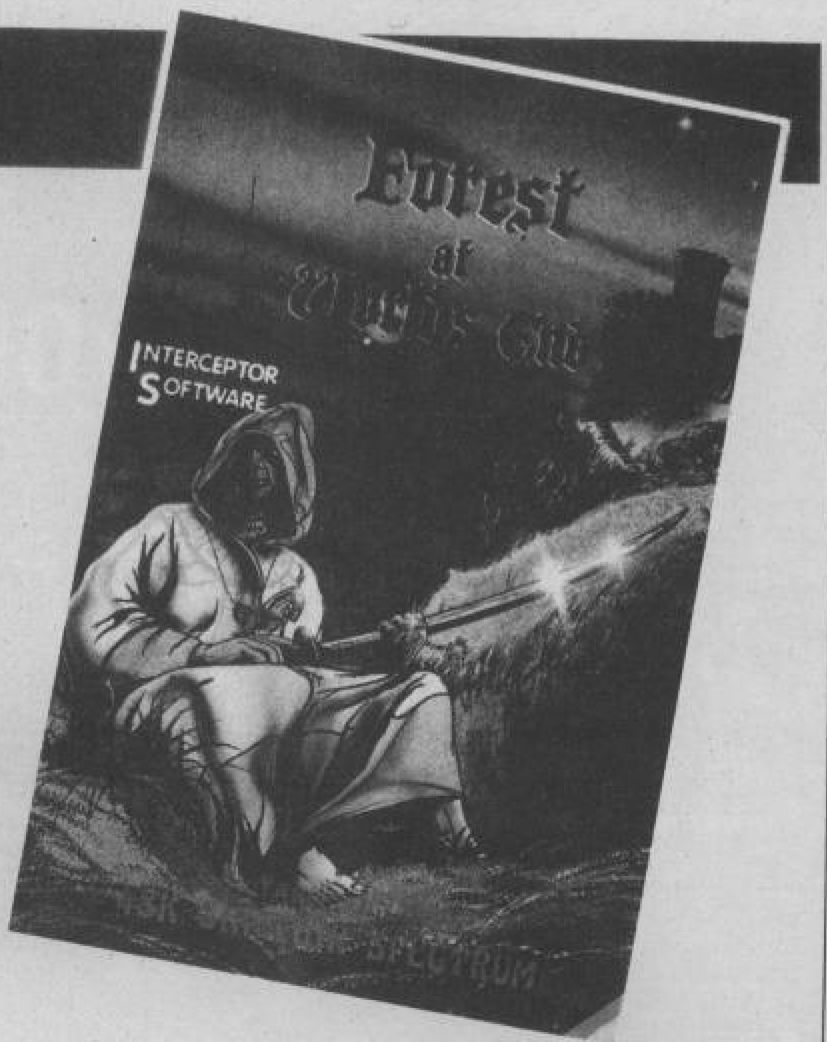
SPECTRUM DISK INTERFACE

Statacom Distribution have secured the rights to market the Datafax Spectrum Disk Interface. The system is designed for the Datafax/Hitachi 3" disk drive although it can also be used on single sided 40 track 5.25" disk drives.

The disk interface comes

complete with leads and a comprehensive manual. It only uses 8K of user memory for the operating system and allows other peripherals to be added via its own edge connector. The interface also has a system reset button which gets round the irritation of constantly plugging and unplugging the Spectrum mains lead.

The system will save BASIC and machine code programs as well as arrays. A utilities diskette is provided to allow immediate use of the system while learning the commands. Formatting is carried out by the interface rather than by a BASIC program. The maximum number of files per side on the diskettes is 78 (of less than 3K per file) and there is a storage capacity of 100K per side. The user may call on the diskette inventory, erase unwanted files and make back-up copies. The ZX Spectrum Disk Interface was launched at the Personal Computer World Show.



ELITE UNDER WAY

Elite Systems Ltd., formed from Richard Wilcox Software, has expanded its in-house programming force to cope with the fiercely competitive home computer market. With a company motto of 'Right Product, Right Price, Right Time!' Elite have launched their first new game, *Kokotoni Wilf* for the Spectrum.

The new team consists of **Rory Green**, responsible for graphics design, **Neil Bate**, a series 65 programmer, **Andy Williams**, and **Stephen Lockley**, both Z80 based machine programmers, **Paul Smith** and **Pat Maisey** on the administration side and Richard Wilcox's brother, **Steve**, as sales and marketing manager. *Kokotoni Wilf* is reviewed in this issue.

FOREST AT WORLDS END

Interceptor Micros, whose *Message From Andromeda* received an enthusiastic review in a previous issue of CRASH, have just released a new graphical adventure for the Spectrum called *Forest At Worlds End*. It is a mystical story about the continual battle between the forces of Light and Darkness, and is another princess rescue game. Princess Mara is captured by the evil wizard Zarn, and your task is to go get her and bring her safely back to the Great Valley. Interceptor are fairly new to the Spectrum, having previously concentrated more on the Commodore 64 with arcade games like their Wallie series, but their incursion into Spec territory appears to be going strong. *Forest at Worlds End* will be reviewed in full shortly by Derek Brewster in Adventure Trail.

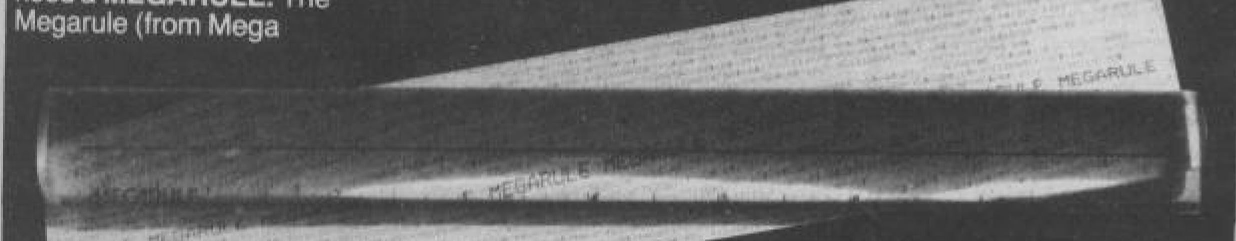
TWIN KINGDOM

Liverpool firm **Bug-Byte** has finally launched a Spectrum version of their popular graphic adventure *Twin Kingdom Valley*. It first appeared ten months ago on the BBC/Electron and CBM64, whose graphical capabilities are considered less restricting than those of the Spectrum – conversion was thought to be impossible. But the author, **Tony Hall**, in collaboration with Bug-Byte's programming team have managed it, giving the Spectrum version rather more hi-res location pictures than the Commodore has at over 150.

Almost every game released these days is accompanied by flurries of 'technical wizardry' rather like the how-it-was-done cinema brochures for a Spielberg movie, and Twin Kingdom Valley is no exception. Bug-Byte refer to their game as 'the greatest achievement in the history of home computing. Techniques never before used . . .' etc. We'll see next month when Derek Brewster reviews it, hopefully with his Currah microspeech unit plugged in. *Twin Kingdom Valley* is available now at £7.95.

MEGA-EVERYTHING

While you wait for *Psybanderclapsesnatch* you may want to fill in time by typing in some magazine listings. In which case you need a **MEGARULE**. The Megarule (from Mega marketing, who else?) is made of solid perspex, and when placed over those tiny lines of listing magnifies them by 100%. You can have it in clear plastic or, for real mega-listers, it can be slightly tinted – ours is in blue. The Megarule costs £2.99 and is distributed through Dealer Deals Ltd., 20 Orange Street, London WC2H 7ED.



CUB PHOTOGRAPHER

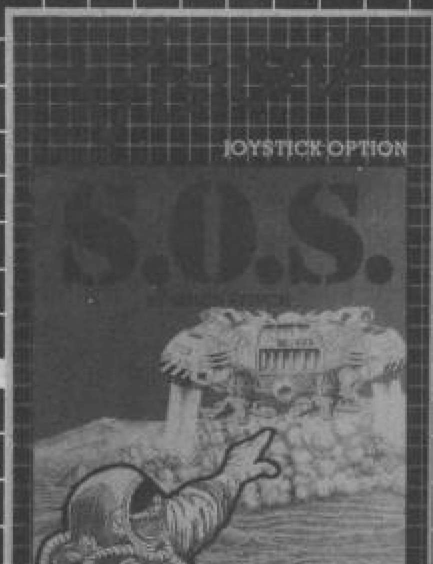
Many readers as well as people in the software business have complimented CRASH on its fine colour screen shots and black and white shots. These have been made possible by using the **Microvitec Cub Monitor**, and its video quality is responsible for the crispness of the image, most especially noticeable in the colour shots. The black and white photographs go through a different reprographic process which tends to lessen their definition over the colour. The Cub has two disadvantages – many of our reviewing team have access to a Cub for seeing games, and it makes them look so good that we often see things in the graphics that the reader may not see at home on the ordinary television! The other is that it has no sound, so you'll need an amplifier or television set near by if you use a Currah microspeech unit. For the technically minded (as they say in photographer magazines) the screen shots use an exposure time of 1/4 second at between f16 and f22. 1/4 second allows 6 TV frames to expose, thus evening out the roll bar effect you get on a TV when it is photographed.

Crash Competition

GET OUT OF TROUBLE WITH S.O.S.

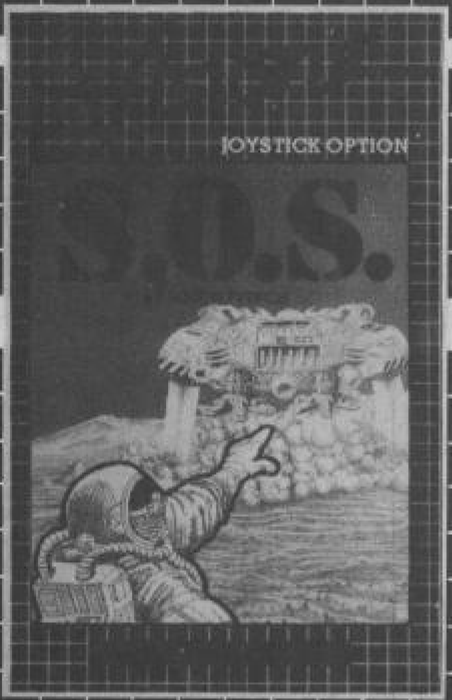
and

Visions



50 copies of **Vision's** game **S.O.S.** are appealing for help and the only way to rescue them is to correctly answer the questions below. You might get some help out of the last issue of CRASH if you get stuck. So put down the joystick for a moment, don your Mae West and get out there – those astronauts need you!

The first 50 correct entries to be pulled from the bag will each receive a copy of **S.O.S.** Entries should be sent to: **S.O.S. COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** and should arrive no later than first post **25 October.**



VISIONS COMPETITION

1 What does S.O.S. actually stand for?
2 Write it down in morse code.
3 Give the names of three other Spectrum games by Visions.
4 Visions have produced a simulation of a well known table game, what's the name of the game?
5 Write down 15 words of 4 letters or more which can be made up from the word SPECTRUM.

Travel with... Trashman

Now Trashman is a great British success he's ready for international stardom – and you can help him on his way around the world. Our hero has the tall order task of cleaning up every major litter spot around the globe. Scooping up flowers thrown into the bull ring by matador fans in Spain, collecting the tissues of the faithful as they sob by Jerusalem's Wailing Wall, picking up coconuts from a palm beach in Samoa and collecting the empties at the German beer festival (Trashman still likes his tipple!) are just some of the challenges that make up Trashman's task.

Of course, your skill can help our hilarious hero to complete the necessary litter collection at every location, so he can earn the money to fly on to the next country in his round the world quest. And as he visits every continent on Earth in search of rubbish you can share every fun filled, thrill packed second with him.

Travel with Trashman has one or two player scoring, Hall of Fame and is compatible with Kempston, Sinclair Interface 2, Protek or equivalent joysticks. Available for the 48K Spectrum today from most good computer stores for just **£5.95.**

TRAVEL WITH TRASHMAN. AUTHOR – MALCOLM EVANS

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Crash Competition



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***100 copies of** Giant's Revenge, **the latest all colour, all singing, all dancing episode in the life of Jack, are up for grabs! And one lucky winner could also win the third episode** –The House That Jack Built.*

What Thor want you to do is to describe as near as possible the **WELL DONE** screen from the previous game, **JACK AND THE BEANSTALK** and you must briefly describe the route through the game to get to it. An accompanying sketch of the route is also essential. We are not looking for the beautiful or arty drawings here **BUT** the best drawn one on the opinion of the judges will additionally win a copy of **THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT** as soon as it's released.

So if you think you're up to facing the Giant's Revenge, get your pens and pencils out and get writing and drawing now. Entries should be sent to: **THOR COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** to arrive no later than first post **25 October**.

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48K SPECTRUM

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BY R.J.SWIFT

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A fully animated 3D display with dozens of objects including spinning lamps, tables, chairs etc.

The devastation continues through the many rooms of this possessed and unhappy place until you have all the equipment you're going to need for the final confrontation with the evil spirit itself ...

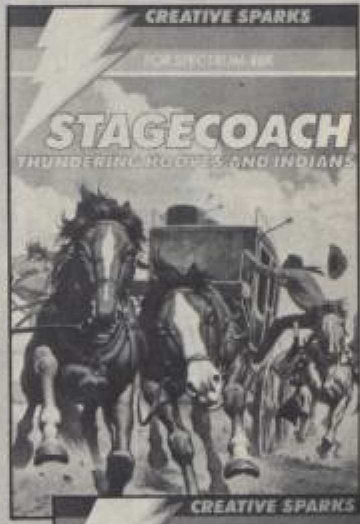
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FAST ACTION FOR YOUR SPECTRUM

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STAGECOACH

A western action game for your Spectrum which really does provide something quite different and exciting.
You are Kidd Rivers, the hero of the game and you must leap aboard the runaway stage and guide it safely over the plains and through the treacherous mountains. Then just as you thought you were safe, fight off the attacking Indians.



BLACK HAWK

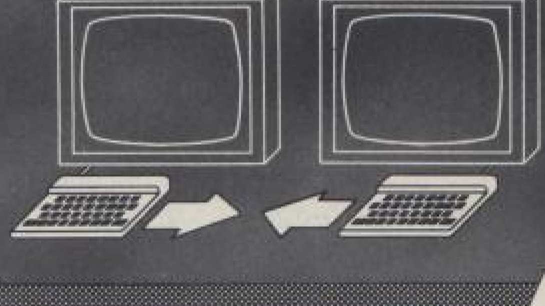
You're flying the world's deadliest aircraft, however it would appear that your Command Centre has just sent you on the world's deadliest mission.
The ultimate in strategic action. This 100% machine code game offers the player two full graphic scrolling screens with over 30 levels of play.



DELTA WING

Delta Wing is an advanced flight combat simulator. It has been designed to give an excellent 'feel' for the tumble and roll of high speed flight. With 15 separate controls to monitor and incoming enemy planes to be dealt with, this program takes you and your Spectrum to the limits.
Delta Wing also allows TWO Spectrum computers to play against each other through the use of two Interface 1's.

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DK'TRONICS

It's not everyday that you see Dk'tronics hitting the software headlines. Dk'tronics has always been the household name for Spectrum peripherals. Recently however they stood in the limelight for clinching the title rights to the Thames TV series THE MINDER and rumour has it that their software production team are on a diet of spinach (straight out of the can!) in preparation for their POPEYE software (It certainly beats junk food). CRASH couldn't resist an invitation and went to see the Saffron Walden producers . . .

"New marketing is required in the software business," **David J. Heelas,** Dk'tronics managing director tells me, "today you need show business to launch a new software hit."

David has strong views on software. Gone are the early days of high profit margins. Gone is the unique position of being on the market place at the right time and cashing in on the initial surge. The fools paradise did not last very long. The market has found it's own level now.

"Software is overpriced! Too much is written about piracy. The punters will not save up for software between £5 to £10. The 80-90% of home computer owners who are dedicated games players are no different from the pop fans. There is a strong parallel to the record industry. The production cost for a game is far cheaper than for a single. And yet a pop hit is far cheaper. The life of a game is the same as for a record." David believes kids to have a disposable income of £2 to £3.

High prices have contributed to the market bottoming out. So the current trend is for prices to come down. But David doesn't believe that the quality of the games should suffer. He believes in a tight cost control. The hardware market with its tight margins would not exist without it and he should have some experience in that! Software does not escape from the usual cost management disciplines. Dk'tronics three new releases will be priced at £3.95 despite the expensive rights for the showbiz titles (the third game is still awaiting contract approval from a major British car manufacturer).

Of major benefit is their new development system, which allows them to cross-assemble a new game within weeks of conception onto any of the 5 or six systems. This makes possible the production of a low cost good quality game by spreading the development cost over several computer systems such as the Spectrum, Commodore 64, memotech, MSX and Amstrad. To execute all of this there is an in house software team backed further by three to four good part-time software writers.

"Software is overpriced! The punters will not save up for software between £5 to £10."

HARDCORE

On the hardware front all is not quiet. "We are spreading the base," **Roger Barnard,** Dk'tronics PR and advertising manager, informs me. Just launched is an Epsom version Centronics printer interface for the Spectrum, which obviates the need of loading software for copy and list, etc. Nearing a launch date is a speech synthesiser for the Spectrum and the Oric. Further afield is a secret new games control in development, which will allow the games player to sit in his armchair and play away (Why don't people call the things by their name . . .). A lot more development is going onin the non-Spectrum range of products, as Amstrad, MSX and Commodore 64 are screaming for new peripherals.

To be fair, Dk'tronics seem to have covered all aspects of Spectrum peripherals and have proven to be the market leader in this area. Dk'tronics main stay is still the Spectrum keyboard which has been selling well for over 3½ years now and must be in the homes of nearly 10% of all Spectrum owners. Strange enough, there wre originally doubts on the viability of an aftermath keyboard for the Spectrum. In the end, the improvement from the ZX81 flat membrane keys to the Spectrum moveable rubber keys did nothing to stop this lucrative market and Dk'tronics have never looked back . . .

The light pen followed the keyboard and the new range now includes the dual port and programmable joystick interfaces and the three channel sound synthesiser.

"We are in a unique position of being a hardware and software orientated company. We don't need the software profit," **Neil Rawlingson,** finance director, tells me and he should know. The software end of the business started 2½ years ago and has experienced successes such as *3D Tanxx* which sold over 140,000 copies and *Dictator,* which is

"We are in a unique position of being a hardware and software orientated company. We don't need the software profit."

REVISITED

still a steady runner abroad (in Spain of all places!). Last September saw the launch of 267 programs. "That was to remind the market of our strong presence . . . An error because of the problem of promoting any one title . . ."

The software turnover was averaging one third to two thirds of hardware when the software market plummeted this summer. The new releases should re-establish this side of the business. In the meantime customers may profit from a special offer of £25 worth of software free with every Spectrum add-on keyboard bought from a Dk'tronics dealer.

WHERE TO

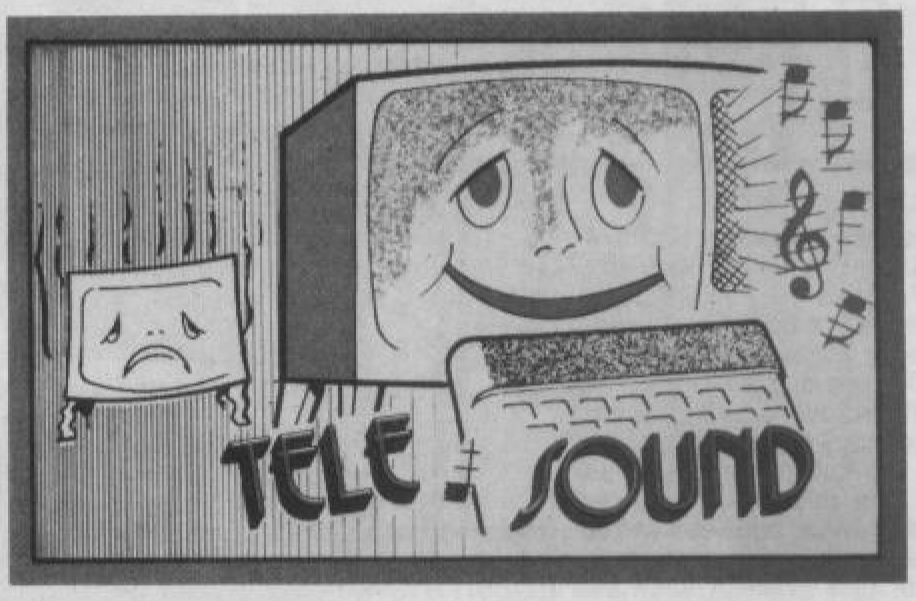
David is looking at the possibility of becoming a computer manufacturer. There is the advantage of using the expertise gained in hardware and software. But it would have to be a low cost processor-related consumer product for the leisure industry. Not along the lines of your standard home computer of today, but more towards a universal leisure machine. At present the hardware production is still at Great Yarmouth, only the admin and marketing are situated in Saffron Walden. Production accounts for 30 of the 52 personnel.

1985 will see the transfer of the production to Saffron Walden uniting the personnel in a specially built £300,000 factory unit. Quite a long way from the 8 x 7ft bedroom from where it all started back in April 1981.

David gets fun out of running the business. He finds there is a lot of amusement to be had out of what happens in this industry. Needless to say he thinks Dk'tronics will be around for a long time.



"New marketing is required in the software business, today you need show business to launch a new software hit!"



A SOUND INVESTMENT

Franco Frey goes Bleeper Boosting

PIANO PIANISSIMO

If you think your ears need a washing, then it's high time that you assist the internal bleeper of the Spectrum in penetrating the empty caverns of your ear. There are several sound amplifiers on the market for the Spectrum. Most of them include a loudspeaker and some feature special sound generator chips, which are only useful if you do your own programming.

Compusound on the other hand reduce the cost of the unit by utilising the existing hardware and by arranging the electronics within the Spectrum. This saves costly packaging and leaves the edge connector free for other uses. **TELESOUND** makes use of the amplifier and loudspeaker of the TV set, a special loudspeaker is therefore not required. The beep signal is modulated and brought via modulator onto the antenna input of the TV set. This may prove to be a handicap, if you have a mute monitor connected to your Spectrum, but most users operate with normal TV sets.

ANDANTE

The unit comes in a cassette box and consists of a miniature populated *pcb* with three flying leads terminated with crossleaf gold contacts. The instructions are very explicit and there should be no problem in following the connection procedure without committing silly errors.

The *pcb* is located beside the video modulator or underneath the voltage regulator heatsink depending on what type of Spectrum issue you have. The connections are made fairly easy by clipping the gold contacts onto the correct component terminals on the Spectrum board. The major problem howver is that it is quite easy to create a short circuit with the bare contacts by touching neighbouring terminals or tracks. The same thing can be said about the mini printed circuit board. The only answer to this problem is that the *pcb* and the contacts should be carefully shrouded ininsulating tape. A better solution for the contacts would be to solder the flying leads to the terminals, but this obviously cannot be expected to be done by the average Spectrum owner. This problem could lead to serious trouble if care is not taken during assembly.

FORTE FORTISSIMO

The installation should be double checked to make sure everything is at it's right place and only then should the Spectrum be switched on. Only one adjustment is required for the proper functioning of *TELESOUND.* A trimmer capacitor provides an adjustment of the modulation frequency for the TV sound. Therefore the Spectrum is best left open and a beep loop program initiated. With the constant beep sound the trimmer can be adjusted for maximum sound output (It helps to recheck the TV tuning as some background hiss may be audible at a high volume level).

The *TELESOUND* can now be positioned in its final position and the Spectrum reassembled. The sound effects can now reverberate throughout the house and the fight for TV volume control between mum, dad and you . . .

FINALE LARGO

TELESOUND is an effective sound booster for the Spectrum. The small cost of £9.95 is achieved by making use of existing hardware and the quality of the sound will depend on the quality of your TV set.

The installation causes the loss of the Spectrum guarantee and serious thought will have to be given to this. The installation may prove to be a bit fiddly and may require some parental overlooking. *TELESOUND* will not cause any problems with other add-ons such as microdives and joysticks, etc., as it does not involve the use of the system bus.

TELESOUND definitely is a sound investment and converts your shy Spectrum into a public nuisance.

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Sequel to No 1 Game Jack and The Beanstalk

48K Spectrum £6.95 **CBM 64 £7.95**



by CHRIS KERRY



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This superb new interface is one of our very latest developments for your Spectrum.
Offering even more features, and as it's programmable from the keyboard or with the cassette supplied you can now use it with any software.

Features include:-
- 17 directional movement
- Keyboard fully functional
- Rear connector for other add-ons
- Microdrive compatible



NOT JUST A PRETTY *Inter* FACE!

The Spectrum dual port joystick interface is a highly versatile and price competitive joystick interface offering two joystick ports.
The first port simulates 6,7,8,9, & 0 keys. The second port simulates in (31) command.
The ports will accept any Atari style joystick.
It will run any software. That is:-
- Using keys 6,7,8,9 & 0.
- Having redefinable key functions.
- Using in (31) (i.e. Kempston).



NOT JUST A PRETTY *Inter* FACE!

The new dk'tronics Parallel Centronics Interface will link your Spectrum to any printer with a standard centronics input. As the choice is vast, you can select the printer exactly suited to your needs.

Features of the Interface include:
- Runs all parallel centronics type printers
- Controlling software fully relocatable
- Interfaces with any software using the printer channel e.g. Tasword Dev pack etc.
- LLIST LPRINT recognised. High res screen dumps
- All control codes allowed through to printer
- Fully microdrive compatible
- Supplied with full instructions and controlling software

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SOUND IDEAS FOR YOUR SPECTRUM

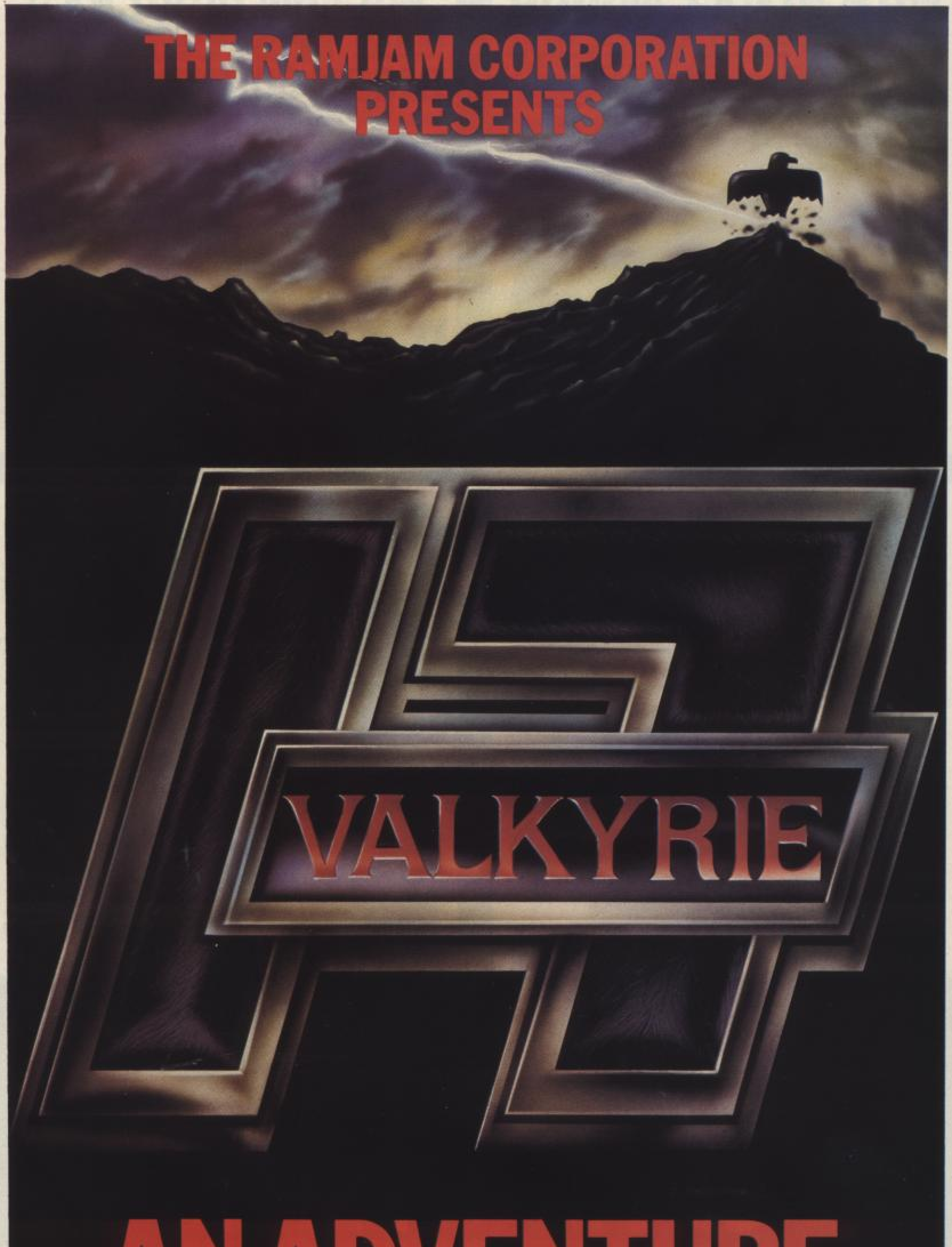
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The Spectrum Connection



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Crash Competition

WIN TWO GAMES FROM DOLLAR SOFT!

50 lucky people could each win a copy of Dollar Soft's latest adventure game *BLACK TOWER* and the arcade game *DOTTY* which was reviewed in the August issue of CRASH. All you have to do is correctly answer the simple questions below.

Dollar Soft is based on Bradway, Sheffield, and centres around the father and son team of **Ray** and **Richard Stevenson**. Richard programs and Ray looks after the business end. It all began in 1980 when Richard was 11 and started secondary schooling at Jordanthorpe school in Sheffield and discovered computers. The interest became all consuming until Ray ticked him off for always staying late at school. The solution seemed obvious and for that Christmas Richard got a ZX81. A few weeks later he had written his first adventure – *Haunted House*. Some five months later he upgraded to the new ZX Spectrum and wrote a version of the arcade game 'Panic' which they attempted to market without much success, being unfamiliar with the wheeler-dealering required.

After another twelve months, and with some more practical experience it seemed sensible to have another go and Richard wrote *Suicide Island*, *Paddy*, *Dotty* and *Black Tower* together with another school friend, *Philip Durbridge* who, at 15, is the same age as Richard.

In April 1984 Dollar Soft was formed to market the programs both here and abroad and they are currently exporting to South Africa and Australia. Ray intends that they will produce only two or three top quality programs a year for the Spectrum and probably for the Amstrad as well. A new Spectrum game is in the pipeline even now.



Richard Stevenson (front) and Philip Durbridge at the keyboards

DOLLAR SOFT COMPETITION

The Questions

1. What is the name given to the tunnel which allows you to go off one side of the maze and enter the other in DOTTY?
2. How many keys are used to control DOTTY?
3. Which Sheffield company has just released WANTED: MONTY MOLE, and which controversial figure is featured in the game?
4. In which city is Dollar Soft based
5. For which magazine does the author of 3D HAUNTED HEDGES by Micromega write?
6. In what year was BLACK TOWER programmer Richard Stevenson born?





Write your answers to the questions on a postcard (or back of a sealed envelope) and remember to add your name and address before posting it to: **DOLLAR SOFT COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** to arrive no later than first post **25 October**. The first 50 correct entries drawn from the bag will each receive a copy of *DOTTY* and *BLACK TOWER*.

Crash Competition

WIN A COPY O
ADVENTURE FRO

And help them write another one!!

C.D.S Microsystems has recently acquired the rights to *CASTLE BLACKSTAR*, a text adventure originally written and marketed by SCR Adventures. *Castle Blackstar* is the first of a planned trilogy under the general title of *The Artemis Quests*. You could be a lucky winner of part two *Pyramids of the Sun*, if you can think up a title for the third part.

In CRASH Issue 2 (March) we reviewed *Castle Blackstar* and, although we assume as a matter of course that you all have your issue 2 copies handy (!), here is the gist of the story:

Your task is to enter *Castle Blackstar* at the behest of a beautiful, mysterious woman glimpsed in a dream. There you must recover her power orb from the vast underground caverns. To achieve maximum points all treasures found must be cleaned of their evil, all puzzles solved and the orb returned to the dream woman, who turns out to be none other than the Goddess Artemis.

In our review we said, *Castle Blackstar* ranks with Artic's best . . . with fast machine code response this works very entertainingly.' Perhaps the only reservation at the time was the steep price of almost £9. C.D.S. have put that right and it now costs £6.95.



OF A NEW
OM C.D.S.!!



THE COMPETITION

What C.D.S. want is for you to help them complete the trilogy. Part 1 *Castle Blackstar* is available now. Part 2 *Pyramids of the Sun* will be released shortly before Christmas, but the third part is as yet un-named and unwritten. The idea is for **you** to think of a suitable title for the third part. Obviously you are going to need to play *Castle Blackstar* to get the feeling for the Artemis Quest before working one out. From the winning entries C.D.S. will pick the title they think is most suitable and the third part of the trilogy will then be written around it.

HOW TO ENTER

When you think you have succeeded in finding a suitable title for the third part of the Artemis Quests, write it down on a postcard (or back of a sealed envelope) together with your name and address and send it in to: **ARTEMIS COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**

The competition closing date is **November 25.**

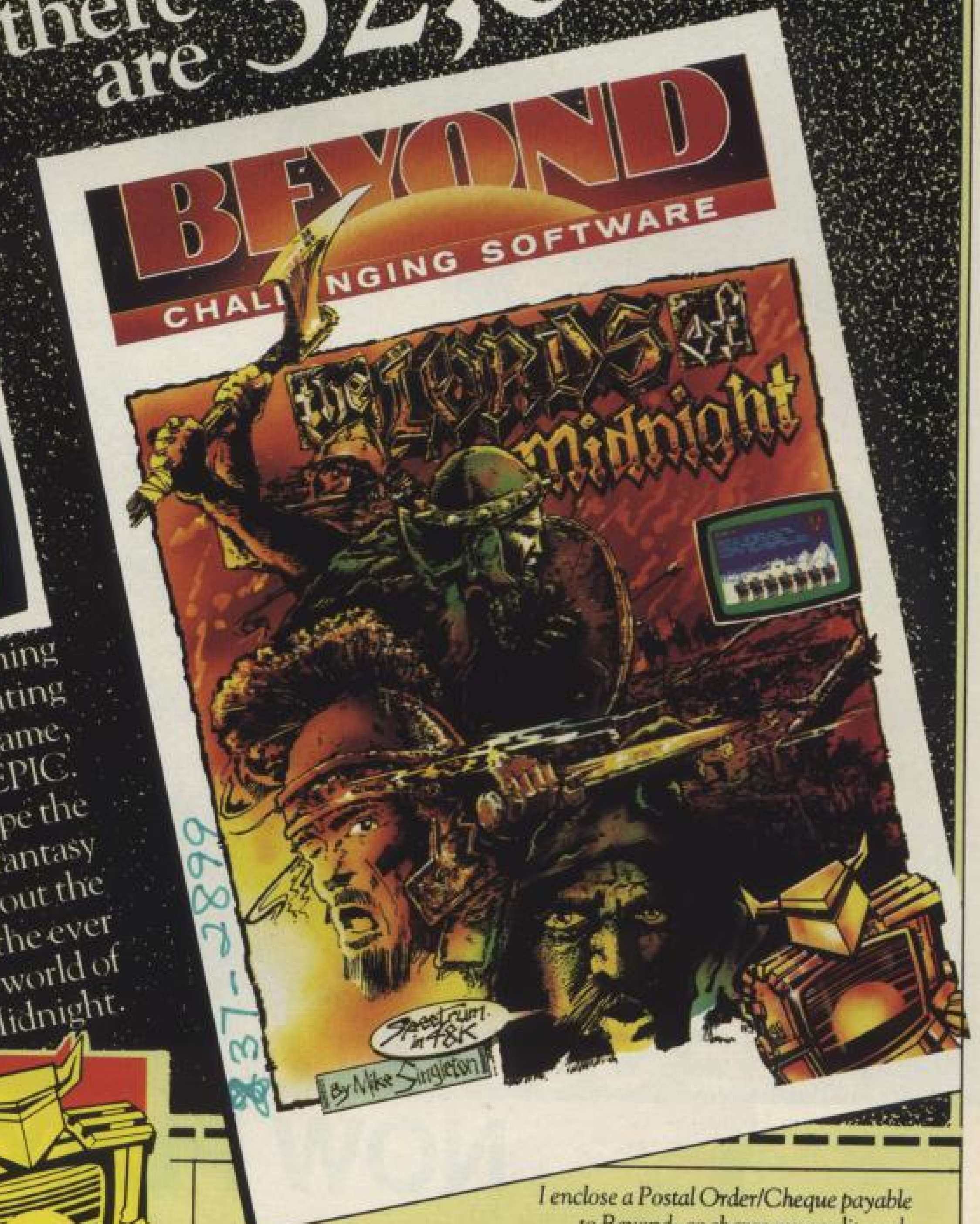
C.D.S. will pick 25 of the best titles from all entries, and these winners will each receive a copy of the 2nd part **PYRAMIDS OF THE SUN.** Winners will receive these before they are available in the shops. C.D.S. reserves all rights to the titles submitted and competition entries will be deemed as acceptance of this condition.



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Somewhere, buried deep in the lost caverns of Machu Pichu, Peru, lies the stolen and, of course, priceless Raj Diamond, along with a hoard of missing gold bars.

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A wealthy university has asked him, while he's cleaning this mess up, to capture an elusive stone-age cave rat.

What fun.

He just has to avoid the occasional poisonous frog.

Oh yes. And the wickedly clawed condors. The electric eels. And a very nasty line in thirsty vampire bats.

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DEREK BREWSTER'S Adventure Trail



ADVENTURE TRAIL REVIEW RATINGS

ATMOSPHERE: reflects quality of location description and graphics and how credibly characters behave.

VOCABULARY: the completeness of the vocabulary and friendliness of response. All words and associated words (objects etc) in location descriptions should be included.

LOGIC: reflects the logic of the problems encountered and whether or not you are likely to be killed without warning or chance of escape.

DEBUGGING: indicates the level of crashproofing. A program should not be crashed simply by making an incorrect entry or by pressing an unfortunate combination of keys.

OVERALL: general rating based on price and the other ratings BUT NOT AN AVERAGE OF THE OTHER RATINGS.

CLAMBER up the tree and DELVE into the nest

Reviewing adventure games is not a simple matter when compared to arcade games. For one thing, it takes a lot longer to do a game justice and the reviewers own prejudicies can bear more upon an adventure. Leaving aside the fundamental text vs graphics, the vocabulary a game acepts can either reassure or perversely cloud the reviewer's conscience.

Some adventurers have GET, others TAKE and some have both. Some use ENTER, and others GET IN, some GO object as in GO DOOR. Some adventures have tried to establish, and keep to, a standard or a reasonably uniform use of words. Others have entered the market with little prior knowledge of what is the vogue.

My opinion has changed in order to fall in line with the concensus. I at first viewed GET and GO DOOR as crude but now accept these expediencies both for their ease of use and more importantly, for the simple reason that many good adventures use them, and therefore many seasoned adventurers will approach a new game expecting to be able to use them unless the cassette packaging expresses some substitutes.

Dollarsoft have produced some games that display many aspects that lead me to the belief that they either haven't consulted the rest of the adventure market or have done so and rejected much of what they have found. Their adventures are strange but *Black Tower,* it has to be said, is original.

Adventurers, judging by the mail I receive, do not dedicate their computer time to just one adventure and its problems, but have many on the boil at one time. This suggests to me that, as far as vocabulary is concerned, a few familiar commands might help ease the explorer into the adventure and any original or non-standard features should be clearly marked on the packaging.

A game that reduces me to a swearing moron all because its hallowed maker assumes my idea of an adventure is to match the first phrase that came into the author's head . . . well, that game will not endear itself to me, even if it be *Sherlock* itself.

WAYDOR

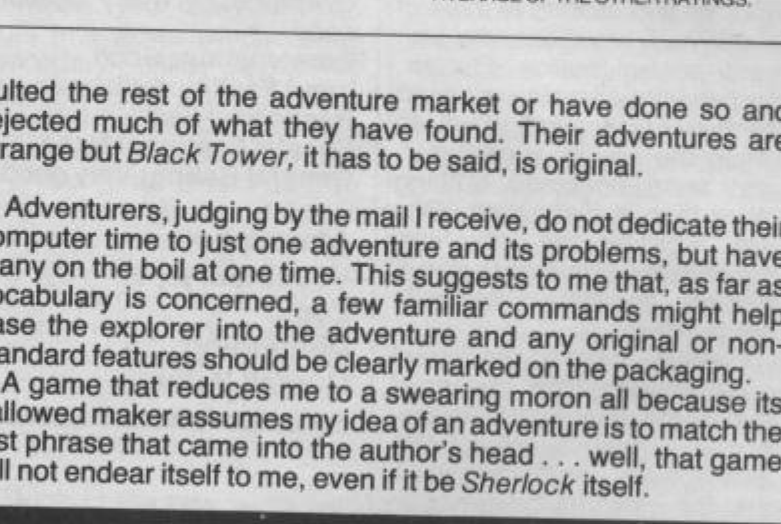
Producer: **IMS**
Retail Price: £
Author: **David Brown**

Waydor, a graphic adventure written first on the Oric, has a lot going for it. It has full-screen, well-designed graphics at every location.

The plot and logic of this adventure is strong but the lack of supporting documentation, and the theme this normally creates, gives rise to the situation where you would like to recommend the game but you cannot quite remember its name. It's not so much that the story and theme are forgettable, more they just didn't exist in the first place. Compare this with *Sherlock* with all its rich mental imagery.

The object of your adventure is to find eight treasures and to return them to their proper place. This place transpires to be a small wooden hut since it houses a notice, 'Put Treasures Here'. Your endeavour to find the treasures is fairly easy apart from (as always) one or two occasions when the game falls off the end of the map.

You set off in very inhospitable countryside beside a castle surrounded by a moat. The way things are in adventures the drawbridge to the castle is up and you won't get it down until much later. Moving east is the most profitable early on where, in quick succession, you can fruitfully enter the now famous wooden hut, workshop and blacksmith's forge. However, it isn't much further before almost every turn brings you to a 'Clearing in the Forest'. This wouldn't be so bad, but this just happens to be the slowest graphic and you soon start to dread turning a new corner should you see those trees. I'm surprised the author didn't consider this an irritation at the design stage – after all, no-one plays an adventure



more than the author himself.

This adventure sports very fast graphics and a good response time and so the adventure flows at a steady, fast pace. Apart from its friendliness and no-nonsense character what greatly aids this ease of use is the clear text layout. A standard format at every location begins with a concise, but always interesting, description followed by clearly marked Visible Items and Obvious Exits. The items are most fully described in ways that lead you logically to possible solutions to the problems that confound your journey.

Where this adventure really shows others the way is in its use of full size, very fast graphics. On entering a new locality the picture appears almost instantaneously, remarkable when you consider their size and quality. When the picture is complete you are told to press the SPACE key. Perhaps it may have been better to press the ENTER key here as it is difficult to think of the SPACE key in this way, i.e., as a control button. Further, perhaps the flashing sign on each picture reminding you to press the key is superfluous and soon becomes nothing more than a distraction. One last word on the graphics; impeccably, some of the later pictures depicting the castle are the best.

Getting beyond technical considerations the charm of the game lies in its atmospheric plot, informative descriptions and comment, and the powerful implementation of a command that adds immensely to any adventure – EXAMINE. Without a powerful EXAMINE, locations and the objects within them become unreal and hazy but this adventure really shows how a strong EXAMINE can enrich a game. Almost every item in the adventure lends itself open to scrutiny. See how an abandoned graveyard comes to life with this command. EXAMINE GRAVES brings forth, 'They're mostly overgrown with weeds and there's only one tombstone left standing.' EXAMINE TOMBSTONE?, why not indeed. You get 'There's an inscription on it – Unwise he who moves my bones, wise be he who moves my stones'. Naturally you move the tombstone whereupon you hear a noise. LOOKing at the location again shows you a new Visible Item – an open tombstone with a secret passage. Note how an examine command has led you on deeper into the narrative. This is adventuring at its best – a million miles from the now hopefully archaic string of puzzles that marked the early adventures.

In even the best adventures there's room for improvement; in this case no I or L abbreviations for INVENTORY or LOOK. Also, when mazes, which can prove over-difficult for a beginner, are *forced* into adventures, well, to actually call this perennial irriattion 'a maze'! Frankly I have never been in 'a maze' but I have no doubts as to the confusing nature of New Town roads or to the success attributable to the torturous paths and well-hidden exits in large department stores!

Waydor is an excellent adventure. It has super large, quick graphics, an atmospheric plot and friendly vocabulary. Highly recommended, even more so for a beginner.

Difficulty: Quite easy
Graphics: On every location, good
Presentation: Good
Input Facility: verb/noun
Response: Fast
Special Features: None
General Rating: Very good.

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	8
Logic	9
Debugging	10
Overall Value	8

BLACK TOWER

Producer: **Dollar Soft**
Retail Price: **£6.50**
Authors: **R. Stevenson, P. Durbidge**

'You must move from one location to another trying to find three keys and ultimately the scroll. When these objects have been found take them to the hut. (How exotic!). When moving about, you may come across various items which may be of help to you later on, and you may pick these up if you wish to . . . may instruct with various phrases such as NORTH, SOUTH, TAKE STONE.'

I hope Dollar Soft forgive me for one moment but this no-



nonsense northern description of adventuring I found genuinely amusing. It's also good to know that the company is continually improving its product – I have version 2.0 – and no doubt Dollar Soft will glean some useful information for the next amendment, once all the reviews are out. The cassette inlay gives the impression of a company new to adventuring hoping to attract a fresh audience. Well, if this is the case *Black Tower* isn't such a bad game and shows some features which, like the cover, bring a smile to the countenance of a jaded reviewer.

The screen is divided into roughly two halves. The upper shows a simple graphic representation of the scene while the bottom half scrolls information about the location, visible exits and what you can see. I say scrolls but this is to demean what is a theatrical romp across the screen. The print enters stage right, prints across at a steady, moderate reading speed, then flits left as if in a ballet dance. Once this bolero has ended a return to the norm is abrupt. You see Josh, a stilted, wooden character first met in Suicide Island. But no, I will not banter endlessly as if lamenting a wet weekend in Whitley Bay. No, this game has more going for it than *Suicide Island*.

Black Tower has an average response time of 27 seconds due to its curious, novel,printing display. It shows some advances on its predecessor, *Suicide Island*, by allowing L for LOOK and both TAKE and GET for picking up objects. The game is a little rough at the edges and doubtless version 2.1 will be nearing completion by the time you read this.

Difficulty: Average
Graphics: Yes, but poor
Presentation: Good
Input Facility: Allows simple sentences
Response: Probably the slowest ever written
Special Features: Character Interaction, but low level
General Rating: Too slow

Atmosphere	4
Vocabulary	5
Logic	5
Debugging	8
Overall Value	3

SUICIDE ISLAND

Producer: **Dollar Soft**
Retail Price: **£5.95**
Authors: **R. Stevenson, C. Hallatt**

Suicide Island describes itself as 'an exciting adventure game in 2 parts to test your skill and patience.' The game requires little skill but you will need a certain amount of patience.

The program begins with the most hackneyed joke in the book – Load "" Code in a Basic program or perhaps you prefer the one about the 96K program that loads in 2 parts when really only 82K is possible. Half the computer world might treat the buying public undiscerning imbeciles but I've never quite subscribed to this view and more recently I've sensed a change in the air. The computer games purchaser has now joined the ranks of the greatly discriminating consumer world now that choice and quality have arrived.

Your first graphic shows no more than a motorway simply represented against a two tone background. The plot has it this is an unused stone road. Looks more like a motorway to me.

The graphics appear at a very slow rate – 100% Basic.

The slow speed of the graphics is somewhat offset by the fact that there aren't really that many. What graphics you do meet are very simple and some are open to interpretation in the best traditions of modern art. What is inexcusable is the very slow printing of text that forms the body of the adventure. The text does not reside in Basic in the normal way but is printed up using FOR . . . NEXT loops from character codes ostensibly to prevent examination of the program.

Each location bears quite a long description but unfortunately these consist almost entirely of references to what you might expect to see in the neighbouring locations. The descriptions are inflexible, e.g., a horse and cart ride past the post office every time you visit this location – an opportunity for a more sophisticated plot lost. Later you find yourself standing in front of a locked gate and you have a key, and it would seem logical to try the key in the lock. And it is here you find the program's greatest shortcoming. You try as many wordings and permutations as you can muster but the program refuses to tell you the outcome of your efforts – the cursor simply keeps on reappearing after an appropriate pause. The program has a good think about your input and then just ignores you. I can only assume I didn't have the correct key. It's not just here. Try and kill – or anything else – the policeman and similarly there's no responce. (It does understand 'kill' because later you can, and must kill Eno). Try to enter the Public House or Post Office and up comes that lone cursor – and no report. Why you can't get out of the swamp when UP is a visible exit I don't know and I think you can guess the response that HELP elicits.

Other features of the game include wooden characters, no L abbreviation for the much used LOOK, and the inability to carry more than 3 objects.

Suicide Island is a slow adventure let down by some dubious programming techniques and departs from mainstream adventures solely for these reasons.

Difficulty: Easy – Average
Graphics: Poor
Presentation: Average
Input Facility: Usually ignores your input
Response: Slow
Special Features: Character Interaction, but low level
General Rating: Awful

Atmosphere	2
Vocabulary	1
Logic	4
Debugging	5
Overall Value	2

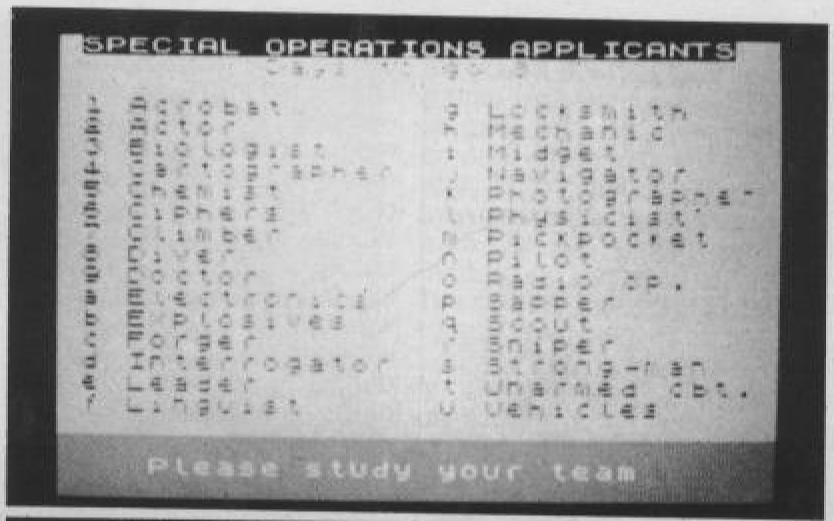
SPECIAL OPERATIONS

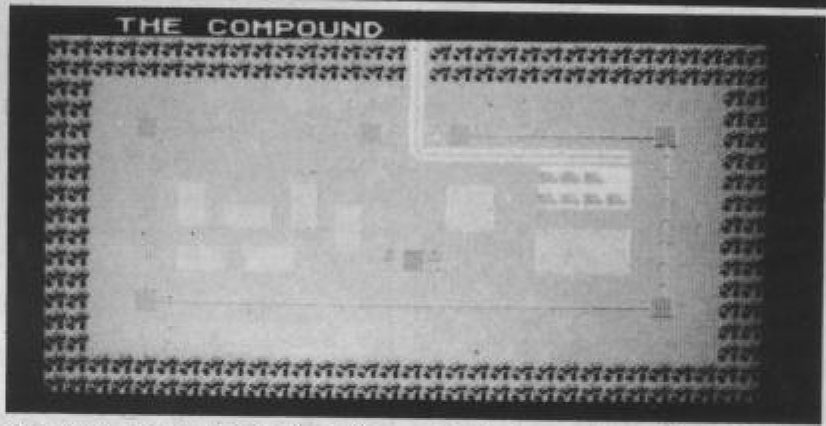
Producer: **M.C. Lothlorien**
Retail Price: **£5.95**
Author: **K. Hunt**

This adventure wargame set in the latter days of World War II has you searching a vast complex beneath an enemy compound where a new and highly secret weapon is nearing completion. Intelligence reports suggest the weapon carries a bacteriological virus and it may well prove necessary to destroy it – lets hope its a 99% household germ.

Early on you set a time limit for one of the objectives (there's a whole string of them) – say 60 hours – which becomes the rendezvous time for your pickup transport plane. The time elapsed since the start of the mission is constantly displayed in hours and minutes. Different actions and skills consume differing amounts of time; moving through the forest is more arduous than moving through the complex. The instructions suggest you create excitement by giving yourself a more limited time than the maximum allowed.

There are 30 skills to choose from including for example Biologist, Electronics, Explosives, Midget and Acrobat. The Leader is assumed proficient in all skills but the strain of the mission limits their use. All other characters have just two skills with their main skill used to describe the character, e.g., Chemist. At any one time in the mission you only have the use of three skills so choosing the four members of your team and when to make use of each skill is important to the success of the mission. To help you make a wise selection of team





members you have time for eight interviews which reveal secondary skills, e.g., the Physicist might also be a Doctor, after which process you must select your team and set off. Your final choice is between the seven different objectives of varying difficulty.

Once you've finally finished selecting time, team and objective you then have a curious one minute wait while the computer frantically assembles a game good enough to justify all the hard work you've done.

Much of the play is centred around the three main senarios of forest, compound and complex.

You are parachuted into the centre of the forest close to the target area and your position is denoted with a flashing square. A key to the forest features can be summoned up onto the bottom of the screen while you try to destinguish between the similar looking blobs in squares. To move you might type in **ms** to move south and it wouldn't be long before you found yourself up against an enemy patrol.

During combat your men are shown at the bottom of the skirmish zone map as numbers 1 (the Leader) to 5 and the enemy are represented by varying numbers at the top. Each of your men selects a target and can then move two squares to either get into a better firing position or take cover. In order to hit a target there must be a clear line of sight unobstructed by trees or men. You can actually see your projectile pass across the screen but its path appears erratic due to character block movement – this looks primitive in these days of sprite graphics.

You possess an aerial photograph of the compound but your position on the map only shows as much as you can see on the ground. The entrance to the underground complex lies in the centre of the compound and is heavily guarded. The photograph you have obtained only succeeds in convincing you of the foolishness of the mission.

Special Operations is a dauntingly complex wargame with simple character block graphics. The instructions do little to make the game any easier to play and so it takes quite some time before you can achieve any degree of success.

Difficulty: Difficult to complete
Graphics: Yes
Presentation: Good
Input Facility: Very limited
Response: Good
Special Features: This is an unusual adventure/wargame
General Rating: Average

Atmosphere	6
Vocabulary	2
Logic	5
Debugging	9
Overall Value	6

BLADE THE WARRIOR

Producer: **Cable Software**
Retail Price:
Author: Shaun Watts

You are Blade The Warrior renown for your prowess with weapons and your quest is to find and destroy the Black Witch who rules the land of Sayell far to the north. You follow the trail of Mazar the Wizard who carries withhim magic strong enough to defeat the witch. The game is riddled with magic and an early sign tells you to seek gold to buy spells.

Cable tell us that the game is written entirely in machine code. The layout of the screen and the characteristic Have a Nice Day! when you quit the game leave me in no doubt as to the pedigree of this game.

At the first location you at once sense the rich atmosphere that pervades the whole game. In your haste to escape a large band of orcs youhave lost all your possessions. Hence this game has provided a good reason for your lack of worldly goods that marks the start of all adventures.

The first problem is logical and it s solution sets you off nicely. The door is locked between you and the orcs and reassuringly you see the word LOCKED blocked with inverse print to help it stand proud within the description. Similarly later, AN UNLIT TORCH is blocked red and A LIT TORCH, yellow. When you've collected a few items the inventory looks super with all the different colours. These attractive features help the game break away from the confines placed upon it by the mother Quill. A few paces east and then south brings you to a trail of blood and on through a dense thicket to a savaged body. You examine the body and it looks like a fresh kill. The word KILL is blocked out in red for emphasis should its connotations momentarily escape you.

The game really impresses after a very little time for its brave departure from the conventions of the Quilled adventure. EXAMINE is not much used in this type of adventure yet here it is dynamic and helps create atmosphere. But further, the game condenses around an immensely enjoyable plot; suspense builds and subsides as in a novel. Here a trail of blood leads to a body. Later a money sack lies looted – after all, how long does loose money usually last? Smoke meets your senses before you reach the hut in the forest. Wolves are heard howling before you meet them. A troglodyte stares at you and you would be wise to heed the warning. These evocative descriptions are the very soul of a text only adventure.

What is amiss is minor. The logic behind finding a torch, for example, just lying around on a leafy path strikes a flat note with me. Its funny howpeople and creatures are always dropping useful things in this way. It might be better, in the interests of a more believable plot, to find the torch on a dead creature or hanging up in his dwelling place. Just finding it in the middle of nowhere makes it look as if it's been planted – by the programmer. Also, that annoying adventure syndrome, the instant death, is evident when you pick up the black axe which then reveals itself, without prior warning, to be an enchanted evil weapon that turns upon the hapless victim.

Blade The Warrior is a very interesting text only adventure with an enjoyable plot. Well worth taking a look at.

Difficulty: Average-Difficult
Graphics: None
Presentation: Good
Response: Instantaneous
Special Features: None
General Rating: Good

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	7
Logic	7
Debugging	10
Overall Value	7

SIGNPOST **appears in the Playing Tips section on pages 88 & 89**

A Crash Smash

SHERLOCK

Producer: **Melbourne House**
Retail Price: **£14.95**
Author: **P. Mitchell**

Rumours of an adventure from the **Melbourne House** stable to match the universal popularity of *The Hobbit* were rife in February early this year. So complex has the game proved to be that it's taken until this time to issue a working copy and the game even now, at this late date, shows signs it may require some more work before it can be released.

Sherlock is an amazingly complex program based on the famous Sir Arthur Conan Doyle books featuring the super sleuth Sherlock Holmes, fiction's most famous detective. You proudly take the role of Holmes assisted by your ever-faithful companion and fellow lodger, Dr. Watson. The story is authentically set in the dimly gaslit, foggy streets of Victorian London. The plot has intrigue, suspense and danger but much of the early game is about shrewd observation, analysis and deduction as you quiz the suspects at the scenes of the murders. Your objective is to solve a number of different crimes and to avoid getting yourself killed.

A subset of English, **Inglish,** first seen in *The Hobbit,* is used to communicate with the program which utilizes a large vocabulary of 800 words. Each sentence must have a verb and there are a few simple, and mostly obvious, rules governing the use of adverbs and adjectives. Several actions or sentences can be linked in a manner which allows many different permutations. **ANIMTALK** is another strong feature, which allows you, Sherlock Holmes, to instruct the other characters what you would like them to do – but each character remains independent and can refuse to cooperate. Where this form of conversation proves most useful is when discussing the case with Watson and Lestrade, an Inspector from Scotland Yard. You can pick their brains generally or direct their thoughts to a particular item or incident. Conversations, as *The Hobbit,* are structured around the general format:

SAY TO WATSON "TELL ME ABOUT (THE PISTOL)". Common modifiers are "TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ALIBI" and "TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ADDRESS".

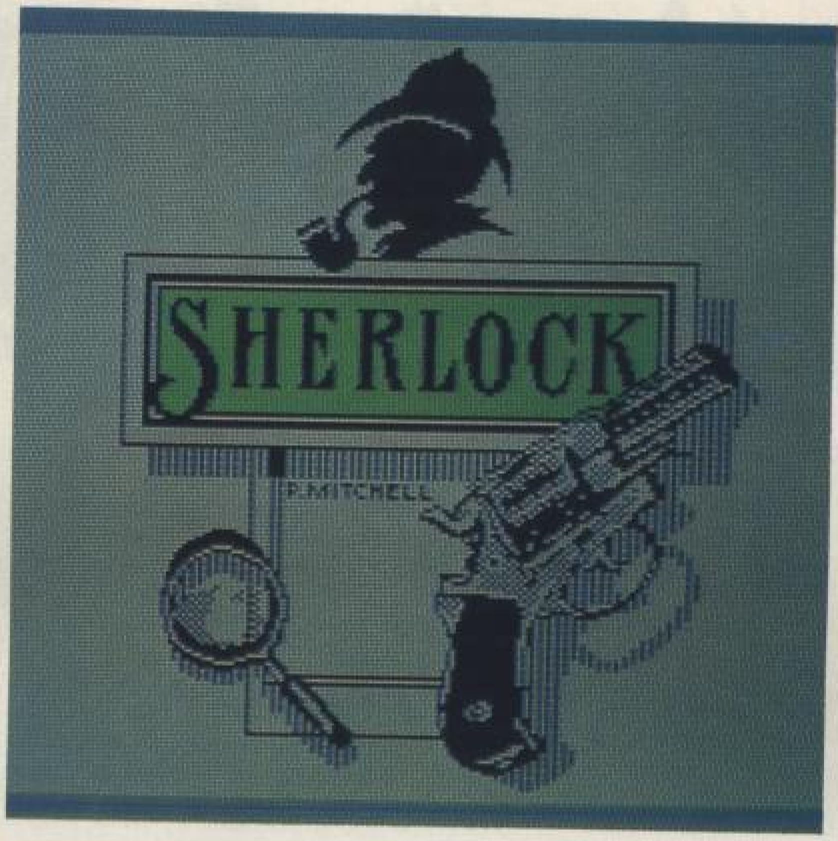
Sherlock Holmes never walked where he could take a *hansom* cab or catch a train and so one of your first tasks once you hit the London streets is to hail a cab. Here you confront one of the strangest things – the cabbie is not familiar with anything other than street names. But before you rush out and buy up all the London A-Z guides the only roads I needed were Buckingham Palace Road (for Victoria Station) and Baker Street. To catch a train you will need to go to the appropriate railway station and find the correct platform. You may be surprised to find steam trains running around the underground which takes you from Victoria to Kings Cross to catch a train to Leatherhead! I'm sure Melbourne House have researched all this and found it authentic – but what a surprise. Movement through houses and around Leatherhead is greatly facilitated by use of the arrow keys.

Time passes as in real life when in a cab or train which can be profitably used conversing with Watson or examining objects. Of course, being an impatient reviewer I just WAITed . . . This method of accelerating the passage of time can be disorientating since other characters in the adventure do not stop carrying out their actions. Each independent character will act in a manner befitting his/her personality and will vary each time you play Sherlock. The literature even suggests a crass approach to a suspect or witness may not elicit a response.

Playing the adventure has you in the sitting room around breakfastime, where you sit with Dr. Watson, surrounded by the paraphernalia that marks the place as their abode – pipe rack, charts, diagrams, oil lamp, sofa and acid stained table. You sit and talk to Watson for about 10 minutes but it is only when you open the plain door that he decides to spill the beans on what's been engrossing him. It's an article in the Daily Chronicle. Two close friends, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Jones, were murdered last

night in separate incidents although apparently with the same weapon. The crimes took place in Leatherhead. Inspector Giles Lestrade from Scotland Yard has taken an interest in the case and will be going to the scene this morning.

It's reasonably straightforward to get out of the house and into Baker Street. In the street you are told that to the north lies the front door. Baker Street is a north-south street but since I don't live in London I won't push the point. GET IN CAB seems in order once I've hailed one but it really is some measure of how pedantic this game is if I tell you that this order brings the reply 'I see no cab that you can get' yet GET INTO CAB brings the most welcome 'You get into the hansom cab'. Isn't a game getting too sophisticated for its own good when it appears so unfriendly as to be unable to accept **either** IN or INTO in this instance? For that matter what's so wrong with ENTER?



If *The Hobbit* set new standards in its time for graphics then surely this adventure does the same for descriptions. These are so copious the game more resembles a novel than an adventure game. Here is the comparitively terse description of your cab journey:

'You talk to the cabbie. You are travelling the streets of London in a hansom cab, the sun shines through the windows onto your face. You can see a hansom cab. In the hansom cab there is a cabbie.'

Notice the clinical end which typifies many descriptions in the game. This clinical behaviour is also seen if you EXAMINE ALL where 'You cannot examine me' and 'You cannot examine Watson' appear in the bottom part of the screen! The examine reports mostly consist of the nauseatingly honest 'You examine the oil lamp. You see an oil lamp.' Here again you just get that inkling that the game's too big for its boots.

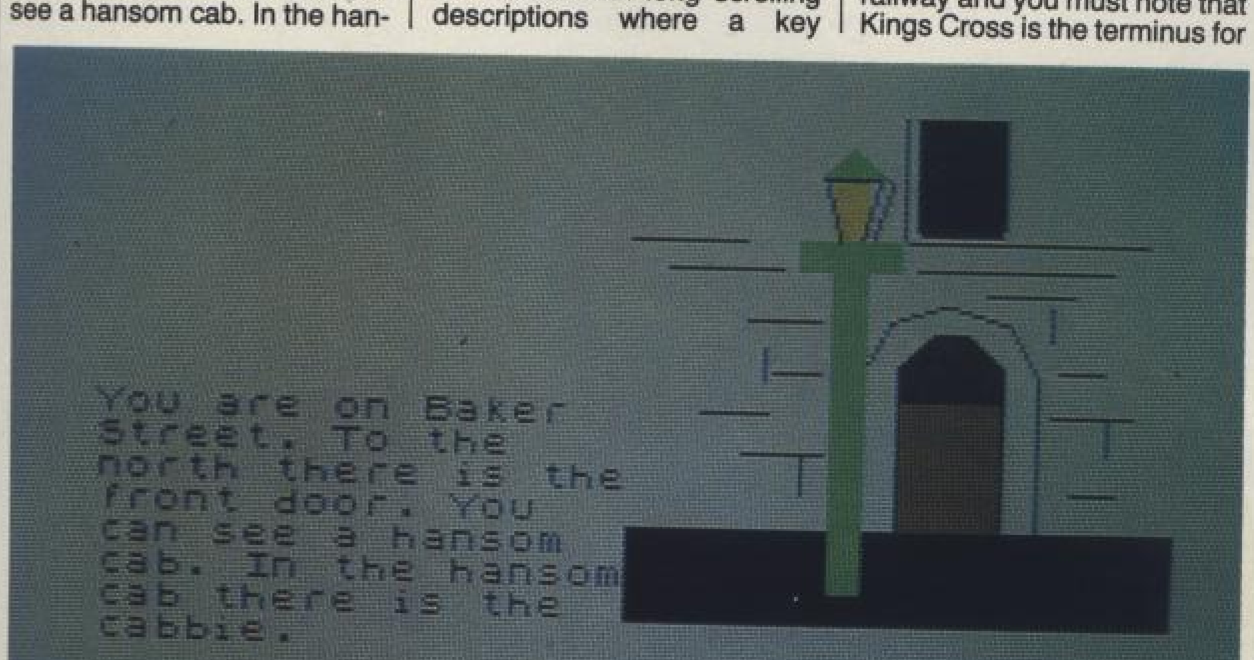
As in *The Hobbit* you must be careful with long scrolling descriptions where a key depression which you thought to be your next input is taken to be a signal to carry on with the scrolling. By the way, about that cab journey, try and be a dishonest Holmes and dodge your fare.

After the cab comes the Underground which, like the railway trains, appear to be free – or did I just miss the ticket office? While I'm with money; during a slack time I counted my money. I had five dollars and 7/6. So Sherlock Holmes was just another American tourist! Back to the railway and you must note that Kings Cross is the terminus for Leatherhead but what I can't tell you is how to get onto the trains. Half the trouble at this stage is getting on a train that comes in without it immediately pulling out on you. Very infuriating. 'You see a steam train. In the steam train is Inspector Lestrade.' At last, I've actually managed to get to Kings Cross before he's left for Leatherhead – should have a super long and informative discussion of the case on the journey with him. But No! What's this!

'Inspector Lestrade with a surprised look on his face, says "Well, Holmes fancy seeing you here." The train pulls out of the station.' This program was just designed to annoy me.

Although the game clearly has a lot to offer there are one or two niggles. The silent key entry is as error prone as you might expect after being wooed by all those sophisticated beeps and buzzes that are liberally activated in most modern adventures these days. That bane of all illiterate code pushers – the spelling mistake, raises its conspicuous head, and then there's that enigma; why is Mrs. Brown's house dark at 1.53 p.m.?

Sherlock is an incredibly sophisticated program. The most impressive feature is the convincing way in which the leading characters go about their interrogations and how these can be followed up with meaningful discussion between the protagonists. The unfriendly language is no worse than with *The Hobbit* and the word matching this entails will be good for the endless articles and help pages which will necessarily ensue. The game can make you feel faintly ridiculous when, after typing in a suitably long and complex sentence, you are greeted with 'I do not understand the word murder.'



Difficulty: Difficult but playable
Graphics: Not many, average
Presentation: Black on white. Poor on colour TV
Response: Fast
Special Features: Interactive characters
General Rating: Excellent if bugs (including crashes) removed

Atmosphere	10
Vocabulary	8
Logic	10
Debugging	4
Overall Value	8

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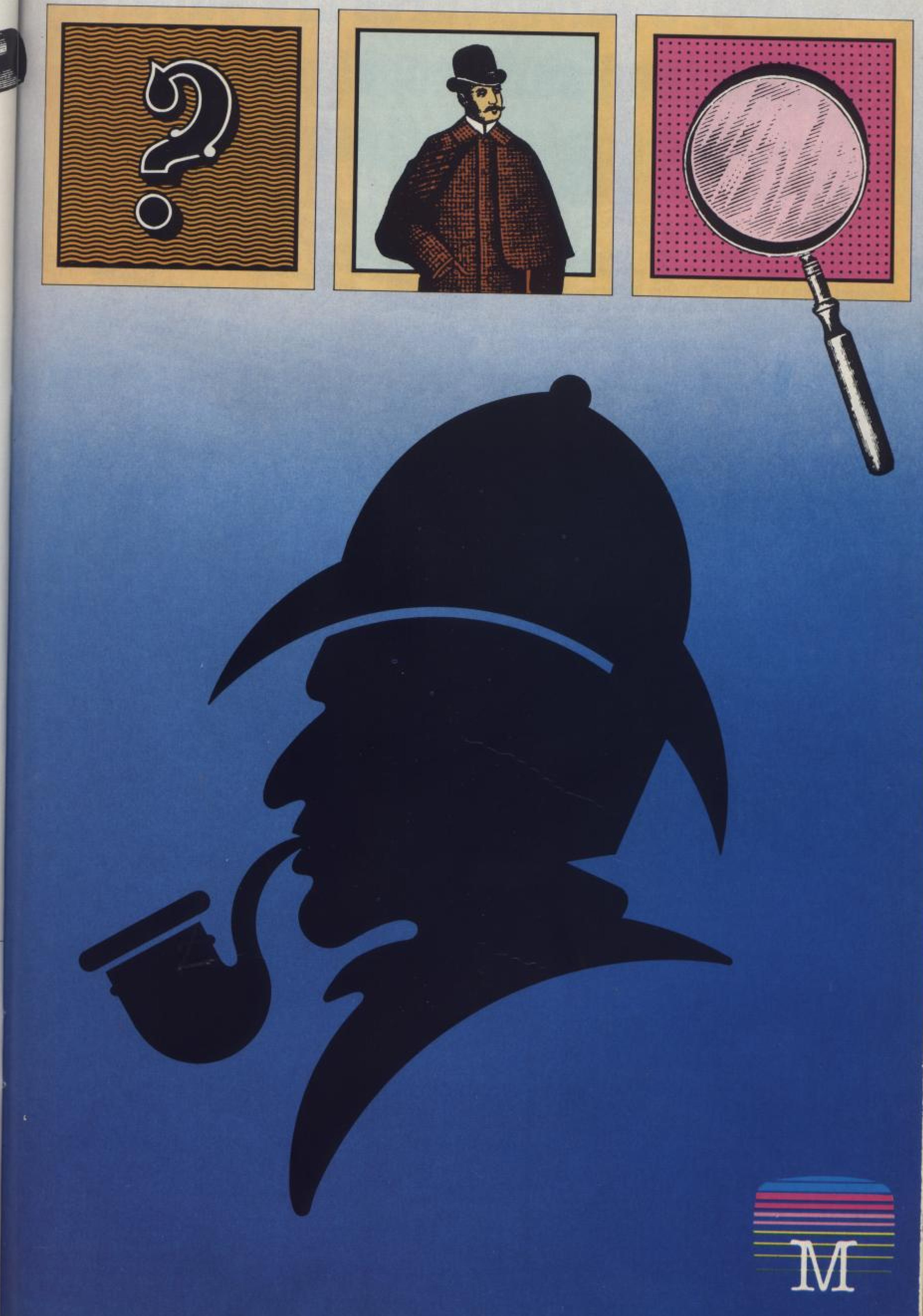
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OUR BRAVE, INTREPID, DYNAMIC HERO, RUNS INTO A PROBLEM AS HE BRAVELY, INTREPIDLY AND DYNAMICALY FLIES THROUGH SPACE...
ME BORED!
HAH! I KNOW WHAT! I WILL CHALLENGE MY ON-BOARD COMPUTER TO A GAME OF 'PACMAN MEETS THE KILL-MONSTERS ON THE PLANET OF VAMPIRE DOOM CASTLES'! WOW!
STREWTH! NOT AGAIN!
WOW! I LOVE VIDEO GAMES!
LOOKOUT! THEY'RE COMIN' IN THE WINDOWS...
FIRE!
SHOOT!
HIT
DUCK
FIRE
TILT
THEY ARE COMING IN THE WINDOW
TAK
TAKKITTY
TAK
TAK
LOOKOUT! THEY'RE COMIN' DOWNA CHIMNEY...
SHOOT
DUCK
FIRE
THEY ARE COMING DOWN THE CHIMNEY
TAKKA
TAK
TAK
SUDDENLY, THE GAME IS INTERRUPTED...
SHOOT
DUCK
STOMP
FIRE
RUN
BREAK IN LINE 426 THERE IS SOMEONE AT THE DOOR!
LOOKOUT! THEY'RE COMIN' THROUGH THE DOOR!
TAKKAKKA
TAK
S'CUSE ME! CAN YOU SWITCH OFF YOUR LASERS! THEY'RE INTERFERRING WITH 'CROSSROADS' ON MY T.V.!
TAP TAP
OOPS!
BY THE WAY, YOUR DOORBELL'S KNACKERED!
LOONY
BWAH! I MUST'VE HAD THE REAL LASERS SWITCHED ON!
NOW YOU ARE FOR IT!
NOW I'M FOR IT!
LASERS ARMED
I MUST'VE SHOT UP A WHOLE GALAXY!
GULP!
I BET THEY TAKE IT OUTA MY WAGES!
IF YOU LIVE TO EARN A WAGE...
IF I LIVE TO EARN A WAGE!
IF I LIVE TO ER...
IF I LIVE??!
HAH! JETMAN FEARS NO COUNTER-ATTACK! 'SPECIALY WHEN INSIDE A MARK II WAR SUIT!
LOONY!
WOW!
GULP! I HEAR AN ALIEN KNOCK UPON THE AIRLOCK DOOR!
THIS CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING...
NOK NOK
...MY DOORBELL REALLY IS KNACKERED!
HAH! STICK 'EM UP!
KICK
SHUT THAT DOOR
IT WATH YOU, WATHN'T IT!
I BET IT WATH!
YOU THERTAINLY LOOK ATH THOUGH IT WATH YOU!
ONLY A THIMPLETON LIKE YOU WOULD GO AN' THOOT UP A WHOLE GALAXTHY!
BUT IT TAKETH A THPECIAL THORT OF THIMPLETON TO GO THOOT UP A GALAXTHY IN THE MIDDLE OF 'CROTHROADTH'
THO, ON BEHALF OF THE CROTHROADTH APPRETHIATHION THOTHIETY...
...I AM TAKING YOU BACK TO MY PLANET...
...WHERE I WILL CHALLENGE YOU TO A THAVAGE DUEL TO THE DEATH!
BY THE WAY, YOUR DOORBELLTH KNACKERED!
HAH!
I WANNA LODGE A *!!☆@ COMPLAINT ABOUT BEING *!!☆@ KIDNAPPED BY THIS *!!☆@ GREEN DWARF!
THAT THO?
SCORES
OUR HERO
IT
000
000
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE THE REFEREE!
PUMPH
OBJECTION OVER-RULED!
ALTHO, YOU LOOTH FIFTY POINTH FOR COMING HERE TOOLED UP, AND ANOTHER FIFTY POINTH...
HOORAY!
SCORES
OUR HERO
IT
100
000
...FOR THWEARING IN FRONT OF A LADY!
GOSH! WHAT KIND OF A DUEL HAS OUR HERO GOTTEN HIMSELF INTO? WILL HE SURVIVE? WILL HE GET KILT TO BITS? D'YOU CARE? Y'DO??? I DON'T!
THEE YOU NEX' MUNTH!

NEW!

FRONT

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT AT THE FRONT
ANGUS RYALL

We have been conscious for some time that CRASH has had two weaknesses and these have been in the areas of adventure games and war/ strategy games. The former problem was solved when Derek Brewster kindly agreed to write an adventure column and review the games. We are now able to overcome the second weakness – and this issue sees the start of our wargamers column put together for us by **ANGUS RYALL**. *Angus is the Software Marketing Manager for Games Workshop Ltd. As such he brings with him his experience not only of software but also the over view of strategy games in general.*







OVERVIEW OF STRATEGY GAMES

Everyone knows that wargamers thrive on 'complexity', and this is what has kept the hobby so elitist for so long. Traditional wargames/strategy games have been virtually impossible for mere mortals such as you or I to crack, and the small number of people playing them has also kept their prices ridiculously high. The arrival of home computers should have changed all that, by getting rid of the number-crunching and all those fiddly little card counters that always end up down the back of the settee. There should by now be as many decent strategy games available as adventures – but there aren't. Having just gone through a pile of strategy games I think I'm beginning to understand why. The people writing them for the Spectrum are giving the sector a bad name – it's the same old idea, of making the players bust a gut to play the game, that has kept traditional wargaming such a minority pastime. Most of these games have abiminable graphics, laughable points systems, and unitelligible instructions. They tend to be long winded and very slow, and one or two are just plain idiotic. Only a couple here were actually enjoyable to play.

DODOS

These were the real pits – don't even waste your tape on copying them.

BISMARK

(ASP)

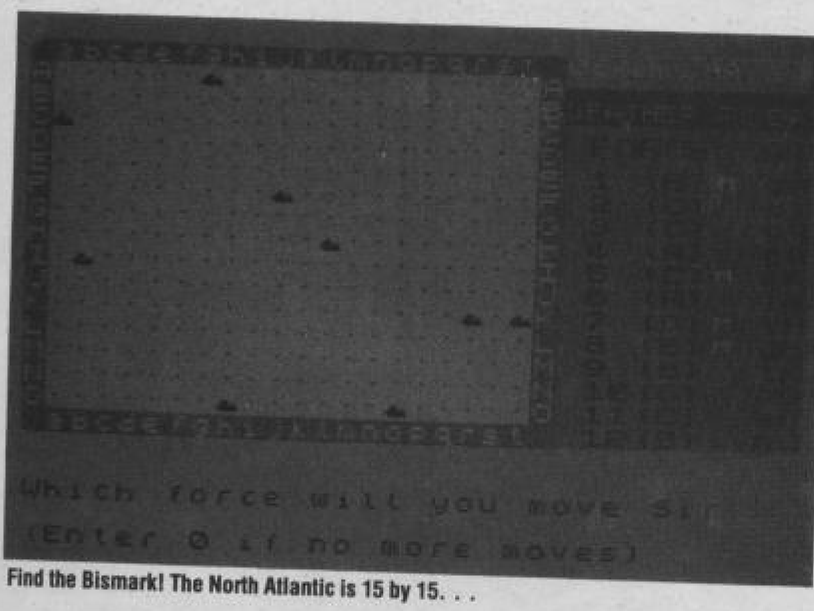
You are in the South Atlantic in WWII. You have 12 battleship groups of varying strengths. You have to find and destroy the Bismark in a grid about 15 units square. It took me three minutes. Lucky maybe, but I'm not going back for another go – I've got too much sleeping to do. This comes, incidentally, from Argus Press, who publish all sorts of really naff computer magazines; but even they should know better than this.

INVASION

(ASP)

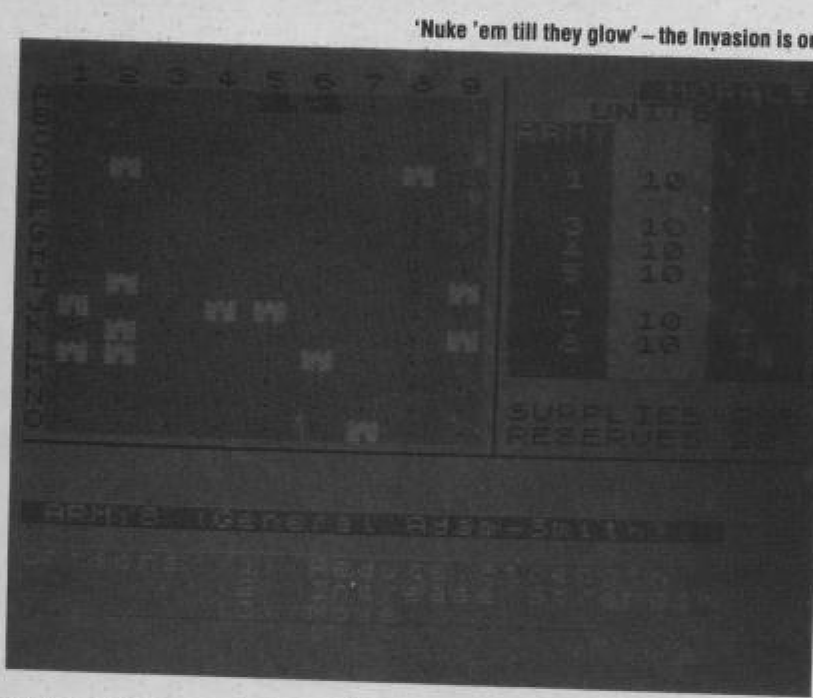
Another one from Argus. This one raised my hackles before it even started – 'You are the commander of the Western Alliance' it says, 'the Reds are attacking'. Then it says 'Reds are stupid' – I think this kind of thing is insulting the intellig-

T LINE



Find the Bismark! The North Atlantic is 15 by 15. . .

'Nuke 'em till they glow' – the Invasion is on.



ence of the audience, like those badges which say 'Nuke 'em till they glow' – it's not really funny, just childish. Anyway, the game is played on the same sort of grid as *BISMARK*, and the evil Reds come creeping down towards you. Each turn you are given so many resource points, depending on how many cities you control, which you then use to buy units and attack points. The Reds are given overwhelming force by the program, which tends to make the game more an exercise in headbanging than a game of strategy and skill. Argus run away with this month's mouldy cheeseburger; and I run like hell in the opposite direction.



DIEHARDS

Slightly better but still terrible.

CONFRONTATION

(MC LOTHLORIEN)

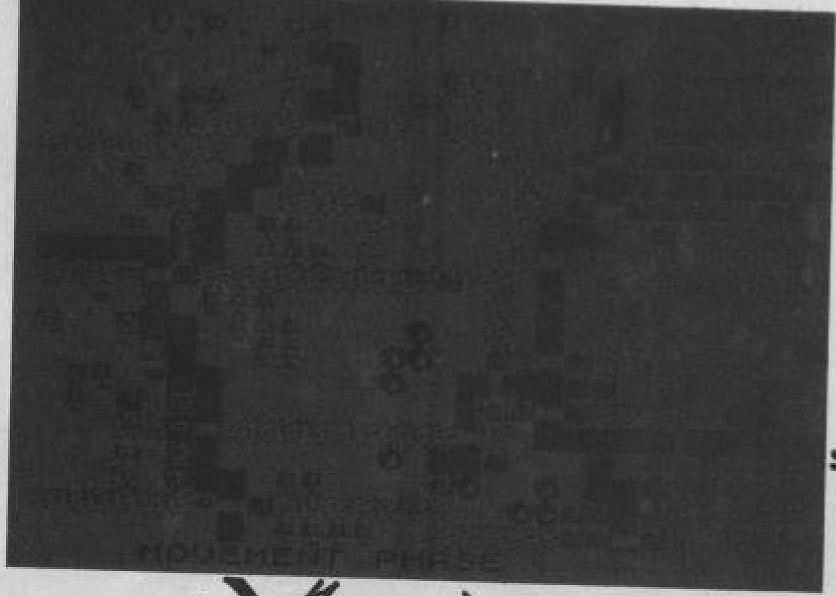
A couple of months ago we ran a feature on Lothlorien, who produce this turkey; in the piece the complained bitterly about the fact that they always had bad reviews. Frankly, looking at this, I'm not surprised. *Confrontation* is supposedly their classic wargame, and is the master program for a whole series of wargame scenarios. The game is above the Argus level at any rate; but it suffers from a problem which typifies virtually all strategy games – the presentation of the map and units is diabolical. In the Lothlorien interview, one of the directors, Roger Lees, said "you have to make sure that the graphics don't get in the way of playing the game". Or lack of them, Roger? The only way to gain any kind of overall view of what's happening is to make a note of where everything is each turn, because an enemy unit only appears as itself once you've moved right up next to it – which can be a little bit late. Otherwise it's all guesswork, which doesn't sound much like strategy to me. Despite a fair variety of unit types, a reasonable terrain system, and a generous scenario-builder program, the game still fails because of this 'guesswork or paperwork' problem.

REICHSWALD

(MW GAMESWORLD)

The map supplied with *CONFRONTATION*, Twin River, is in fact amazingly similar to that in *REICHSWALD* – only the *Reichswald* one is even more primitive. The only feature on this map which bears any resemblance to what it's supposed to be is the river. Merry & Wallis Gamesworld is only a small firm, so I can almost forgive them for that; but Big John Merry is a wargamer who goes back years and years (and outwards yards and yards, my spies tell me) and it certainly shows. They've managed to turn what could have been a nice, compact little exercise into a sprawling numeric animal that keeps trippng over its fifteen legs. Each unit has three strength values, for tank, anti-tank and infantry, which are determined by the computer and awarded randomly at the beginning of the game. There don't seem to be any set movement values (I may be wrong about this but this was one aspect of the game which proved impenetrable). There are terrain differences and victory points, but again, you can't see the enemy (computer controlled this time, by the way) and the combat just sort of happens when you move too close to the invisible huns. Definitely another pencil and

Only the river is recognisable. . .



paper job, and very sssssllllooooowwwww so only really recommended for those about to embark on a term of life imprisonment. Generally about as action-packed as a bowl of semolina.

DIAMONDS

Well, having trashed everyone so far, I feel honour-bound to give a bit of praise to someone, and the only people I can think of that really deserve it are **Red Shift** whose two games *Apocalypse* and *Rebelstar Raiders* are still far and away the best strategy games for the Spectrum, even though *Apocalypse* is now over a year old. Unfortunately, a series of problems at Red Shift earlier this year led to the departure of most of the programmers to form the SLUG co-op; this means that there is an improved version of *Apocalypse* which will probably never see the light of day. But even the old *Apocalypse* is great if you can get hold of it. Before I say anything about it, I'd better make it clear that it is an *anti*-war game (in view of what I said earlier!) but it's subtle in its methods – it really works by forcing the players to *think* about the consequences of aggression. The game comes with four maps, and the distribution of cities can be done either manually or automatically. In addition to the main map fo the chosen area, say Europe, there is a close-up of the cursor position giving unit strengths in each square. As the game plays through, the players (up to four) make decisions as to whether they are going to use aggression, whether to use conventional forces to expand their empires, or whether to use the ultimate sanction of nuclear weapons. There's a lot more to this game than simply blasting away at your opponents, yet you don't have to sit up all night with a calculator in order to know what's going on.

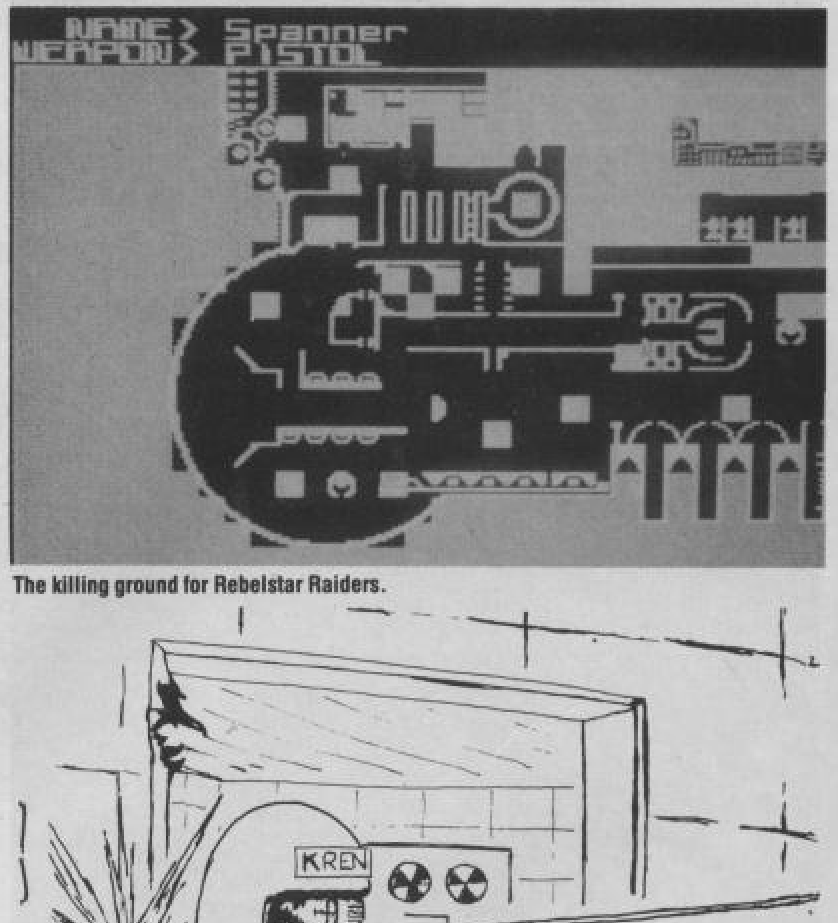
REBELSTAR RAIDERS

(RED SHIFT)

Even better than *Apocalypse* is *REBELSTAR RAIDERS*, where one player commands a team of space pirates in an attempt to destroy the control centres of three different installations (each loaded separately). The other player, naturally, has to defend the installations. The graphics are quite superb, and the installations, which appear as plans or cross sections are designed for maximum game flexibility. Cursor movement is fast and smooth, althought the keyboard layout takes a bit of getting used to. The wide variety of weapons available and the manual deployment of the characters create a great mix of strategic thinking and general blasting power. The only things I really dislike about RAIDERS are the irritating sound effects (which seem to be something of a Red Shift trademark) and the packaging – which is so amateurish it could have come from Merry and Wallis.

REBELSTAR RAIDERS and APOCALYPSE prove that it is possible to write good strategy games for the Spectrum; but they also highlight the great gulf that there is between strategy games, and arcade and adventure games. Whey you consider that state-of-the-art in arcade and adventure changes almost month by month (look at the GREAT SPACE RACE) it is incredible that one of the two best strategy games is over a year old. This is one of the few areas where American software, for Ataris and Commodores, wipes the floor with us. Perhaps it's about time that some of the software houses renowned for their arcade and adventure work took a long hard look at the strategy games desert – the demand is there, when the right game arrives.





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As **Lloyd Mangram** mentioned in his letters page, he's been told to get it together (we've generously provided him with a second tiny desk) and organise an Index for the 12 issues your binder will hold. The index is **absolutely FREE** to anyone who orders the binder and will be sent automatically in January.

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Prizes worth almost £20 are up for grabs and 55 lucky people will be winners. You can win any three of the four new releases from Unique. There's *JUMP* which teaches you how to climb tower blocks, *RED ATTACK* which teaches you how to fly space ships, *VERTIGO* which teaches you how to use a jetpack and *WRECKAGE* which teaches you how to bomb a city flat!

The games are all reviewed in this issue.

The two names that figure behind Unique are **Les Barton** and **Farhang Mehr**. Farhang has spent seven years studying computer science at London University. Les is the graphics designer, an artist whose work has appeared in several national magazines and newspapers.

In addition to the main prizes, Unique will give a free membership to their club to EVERY competition entrant. The membership is worth £1 normally and will entitle the member to receive monthly news bulletins and price reductions on later releases from them

How To Enter

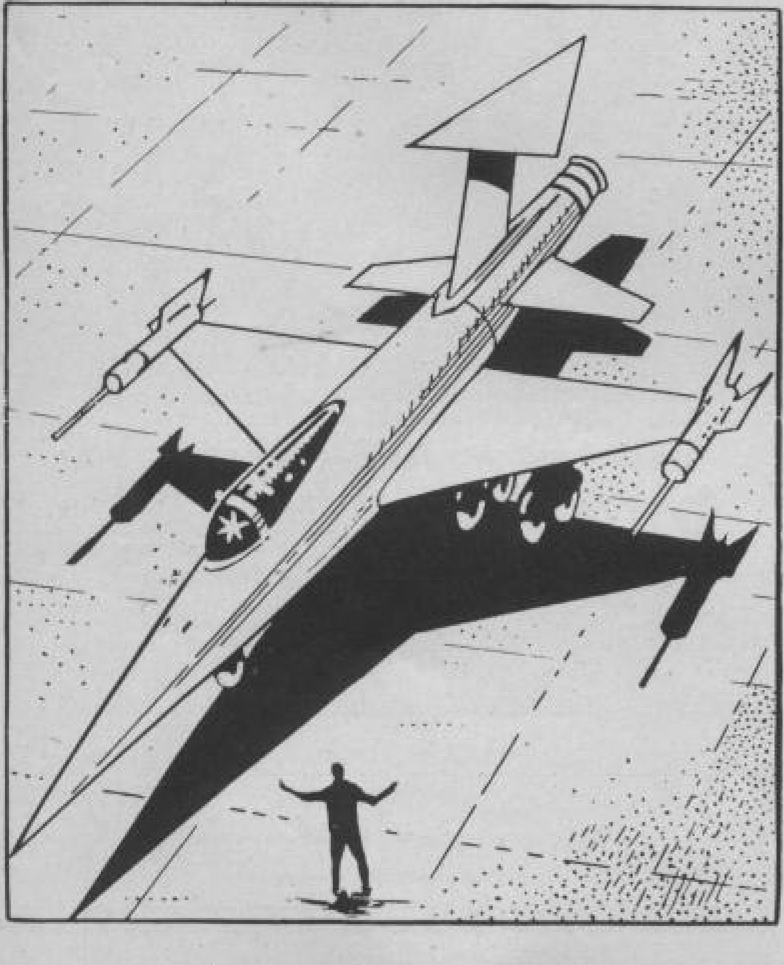
Take a close look at the two drawings below and see how many differences you can spot between them. Circle the differences on drawing **B**, fill out your name and address clearly and send the coupon to: **UNIQUE COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**. All entries must be received by first post **25 October**. The first 55 correct entries drawn from the bag will each receive three of the four games.

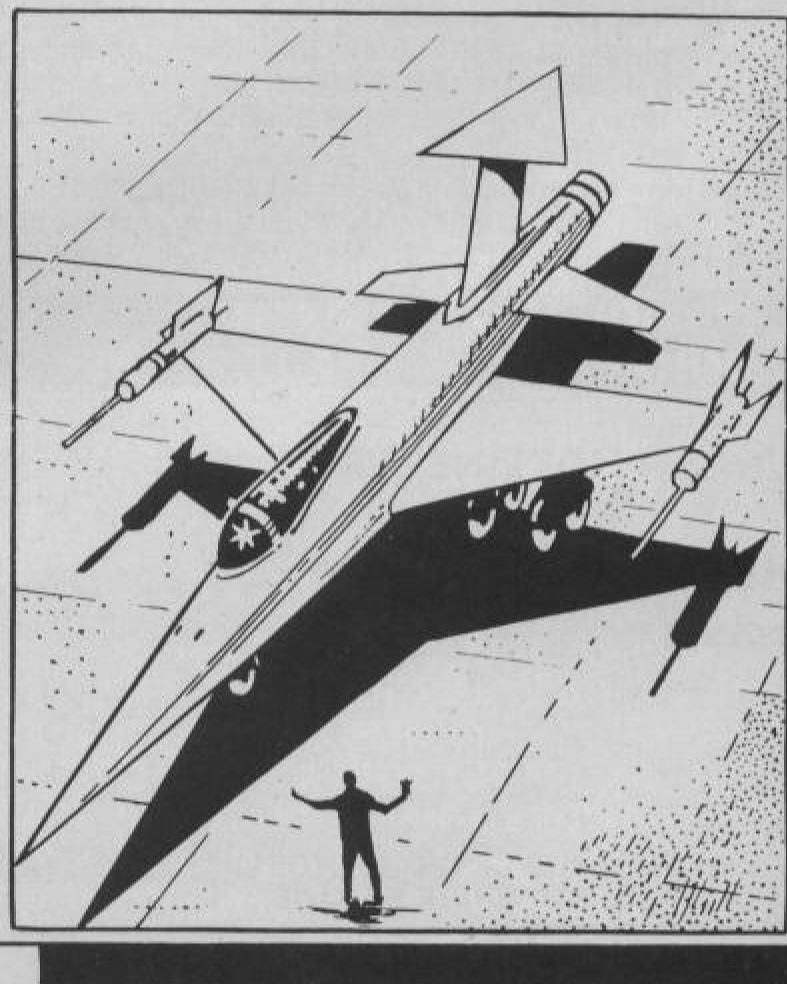
Please don't forget to list the three titles you would like should you win!

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Entry Coupon

Name ....
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....
Postcode ....
Number of differences found ....

Prize choice: Jump, Red Attack, Vertigo, Wreckage
Title 1 ....
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The CRASH HOTLINE

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HOW TO USE THE CRASH HOTLINE

Method 1
Ring the Hotline telephone number (above) and record your votes on the answering machine. Please speak clearly, spelling out name and address if it's a 'difficult' one! List your five games starting with the number one.

Method 2
Use the coupon below, making sure you fill in all the details. Pop the coupon in an envelope and send it to us. Alternatively you may send a letter if you don't want to cut up the mag.

The telephone Hotline is getting very jammed after a new issue comes out, so bear with us if it's engaged. If all else fails – write in!

Sabre Wulf hangs in at number one for the second month with *Lords of Midnight* pegging *JSW* down to third place. Stable mate *Manic Miner* has also taken a tumble down to 8. Big climbers this month are *Match Point* up 21 places to the 6 slot, *Full Throttle* up 12 places to 7, *Kosmic Kanga* up 12 to the 16 slot and Mikrogen's Wally game *Automania* in for the first time at number 18. Bug-Byte's *Antics* has also gone up sharply from 40 to 19 and *Ad Astra* has moved 10 places. Another adventure game, *Hulk* has come up quickly from 46 to 23 and *The Quill* holds on at 26. Nice to see Silversoft's *Worse Things Happen At Sea* appearing for the first time, in at 32. Lower down the chart quite a few old faces have reappeared – take a look!

This month's HOTLINE WINNER is **Stephen A. Graham,** Carlisle, Cumbria. The four runners-up are: **S. Ellwood,** Hawarden, Deeside, Clwyd; **Philip O'Hara,** Bradford, W. Yorks; **Robert Wilde,** Castle Vale, Birmingham; and **Simon Hall,** Blackbrook, Derbyshire.

The Adventure chart has moved around considerably since last month, reflecting the hugely increased interest shown in it by readers over this month. Let's keep it up! Lords are in the news with those *of Midnight* at number 1 and Level 9's *Lords of Time* in at 2 – a rise of 20 slots. *Hulk* has also dashed up from 18 to 3. Another big riser is Level 9's *Colossal Adventure* up 14 places. *Denis Through The Drinking Glass* has shot up from 20th place to the number 9 slot. Please notice that the Mysterious Adventure series is now marketed under the name of Chanel 8 Software, Brian Howarth's Digital Fantasia now concentrating on writing rather than marketing.

The ADVENTURE TRIAL WINNER this month is **Stuart McFarlane,** Glasgow. The four runners-up are: **D.M. Handley,** Solihull, W. Midlands; **Ray Blake,** Rayleigh, Essex; **Keith Jones,** Llanrumney, Cardiff; and **Martin Goldie,** Millerston, Glasgow.



BRILL 'N' FAB HOTLINE PRIZES!!

Whether you phone or write in, all names go into the voluminous bag to be drawn monthly. First out receives **£40 worth of software** plus a CRASH tee shirt, and the five runners-up receive three issues of CRASH free plus a CRASH tee shirt.

Others may try and copy us but the CRASH HOTLINE CHART is the one that counts – and you are the people that make it count.

YOUR VOTE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT — USE IT PLEASE!

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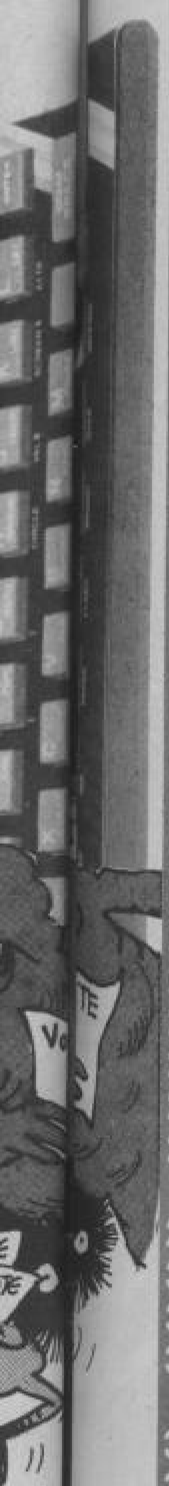
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My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

	TITLE	PRODUCER
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		



CRASH HOTLINE

SPECTRUM SOFTWARE CHART

TOP 50 FOR OCTOBER

(Figures in parenthesis indicate last month's position)

1	(1)	**SABRE WULF** Ultimate
2	(6)	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
3	(2)	**JET SET WILLY** Software Projects
4	(3)	**CODE NAME MAT** Micromega
5	(4)	**ATIC ATAC** Ultimate
6	(27)	**MATCH POINT** Psion
7	(19)	**FULL THROTTLE** Micromega
8	(5)	**MANIC MINER** Software Projects
9	(8)	**LUNAR JETMAN** Ultimate
10	(14)	**MOON ALERT** Ocean
11	(9)	**PSYTRON** Beyond
12	(11)	**CHUCKIE EGG** A & F Software
13	(18)	**TLL** Vortex
14	(7)	**WHEELIE** Microsphere
15	(12)	**3D DEATHCHASE** Micromega
16	(28)	**KOSMIC KANGA** Micromania
17	(10)	**TRASHMAN** New Generation
18	(--)	**AUTOMANIA** Mikrogen
19	(40)	**ANTICS** Bug-Byte
20	(13)	**POGO** Ocean
21	(20)	**THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
22	(25)	**JETPAC** Ultimate
23	(46)	**HULK** Adventure International
24	(22)	**FRED** Quicksilva
25	(35)	**AD ASTRA** Gargoyle Games
26	(26)	**THE QUILL** Gilsoft
27	(32)	**ANDROID** Vortex
28	(41)	**HALLS OF THE THINGS** Design Design
29	(21)	**ANT ATTACK** Quicksilva
30	(23)	**FIGHTER PILOT** Integration
31	(15)	**MUGSY** Melbourne House
32	(--)	**WORSE THINGS HAPPEN AT SEA** Silversoft
33	(--)	**FACTORY BREAKOUT** Poppy Soft
34	(16)	**FOOTBALL MANAGER** Addictive
35	(--)	**DOOMSDAY CASTLE** Fantasy
36	(24)	**NIGHT GUNNER** Integration
37	(--)	**BEAKY & THE EGG SNATCHERS** Fantasy
38	(49)	**WORLD CUP FOOTBALL** Artic
39	(17)	**SCUBA DIVE** Durrell
40	(44)	**PYRAMID** Fantasy
41	(31)	**STOP THE EXPRESS** Sinclair
42	(--)	**ARCADIA** Imagine
43	(36)	**ZZOOM** Imagine
44	(--)	**DEFENDA** Intersella
45	(--)	**PENETRATOR** Melbourne House
46	(--)	**MOUNTAINS OF KET** Incentive
47	(--)	**CAVELON** Ocean
48	(--)	**PHEENIX** Megadodo
49	(45)	**TRIBBLE TRUBBLE** Software Projects
50	(33)	**CHEQUERED FLAG** Psion

VOTE for the CHARTS

CRASH ADVENTURE CHART

1	(4)	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
2	(22)	**LORDS OF TIME** Level 9
3	(18)	**HULK** Adventure International
4	(1)	**THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
5	(19)	**COLOSSAL ADVENURE** Level 9
6	(9)	**SNOWBALL** Level 9
7	(--)	**QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL** Dream
8	(--)	**URBAN UPSTART** Shepherd
9	(20)	**DENIS THROUGH THE DRINKING GLASS** Applications
10	(24)	**KNIGHTS QUEST** Phipps Associates
11	(3)	**VELNORS LAIR** Quicksilva
12	(2)	**VALHALLA** Legend
13	(16)	**CLASSIC ADVENTURE** Melbourne House
14	(7)	**CIRCUS** Chanel 8
15	(--)	**TEN LITTLE INDIANS** Chanel 8
16	(10)	**EPSIONAGE ISLAND** Artic
17	(21)	**PHAROAHS TOMB** Associates
18	(23)	**INVINCIBLE ISLAND** Shepherd
19	(5)	**MOUNTAINS OF KET** Incentive
20	(28)	**MAD MARTHA** Mikrogen
21	(17)	**GOLDEN APLE** Artic
22	(14)	**SHIP OF DOOM** Artic
23	(6)	**QUEST** Hewson Consultants
24	(--)	**GROUCHO** Automata
25	(8)	**ORACLES CAVE** Dorcas
26	(29)	**MAD MARTHA II** Mikrogen
27	(12)	**PLANET OF DEATH** Artic
28	(26)	**INCA CURSE** Artic
29	(27)	**BLACK CRYSTAL** Mastertronic
30	(15)	**TRANSYLVANIAN TOWER** Shepherd

THE GREAT SPACE

LEGEND


RACE
MOVi SOFT 2

PLAYING TIPS

Judging from my groaning desk (now expensively equipped with a tower block of 'IN' trays to make life easier for the increasingly irate CRASH staff – 'Oh it's another load of ****ing letters for Lloyd! Where do I put it?' (Please note that CRASH staff no longer swear, just talk in asterisks) – the Playing tips (to get back to the point) seem to be proving both popular and helpful to those hi-scores.

Peter Wilson *from Matlock, Derbyshire writes:*

Chuckie Egg: on level 7 the eggs by the three floating ladders can be reached by jumping at the ladders with the UP key pressed. Your man will then catch hold of the ladder. You can hop from ladder to ladder if you press the UP or DOWN key while you are in the air. This technique can be used to climb onto ladders faster too.

Deathchase: on the higher sectors 5-8 it is best not to attempt to shoot the riders but keep the fire button pressed and concentrate on avoiding the trees. After level 8 the game returns to level 1 after a large bonus is added to your score. Also, on the higher levels if you go in a straight line constantly firing, you only need avoid the trees your bullets are hitting.

Ad Astra: as soon as you start, move to the top left hand corner of the screen. When one of the asteroids is heading for you, move to the bottom left and wait for the asteroid. When it appears head for the top right corner and wait for the asteroid, then move to the bottom right. When the asteroid comes, move back to the top left again and start this routine over.

Sean Cleveland *from Alton, Hants says:*

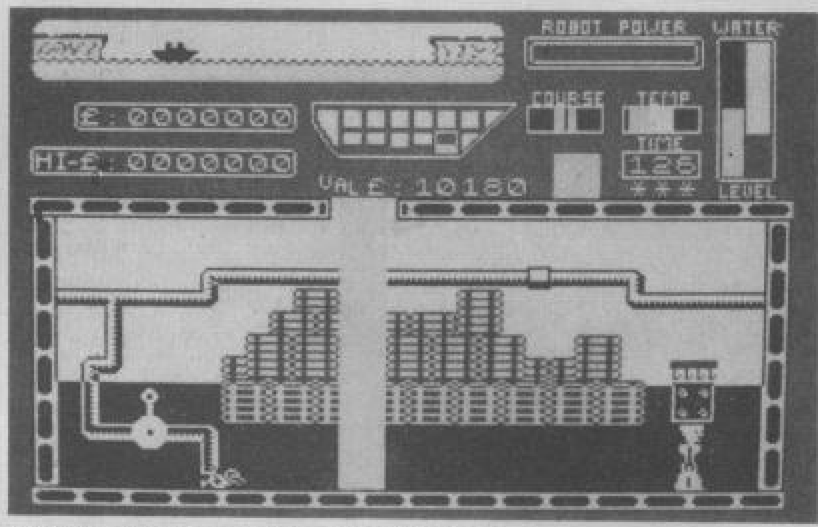
Here are some playing tips for *Full Throttle*. 1) when the game starts always go to your right, otherwise you will be cut off. 2) when in the race always stick to one side (as near to the edge as possible). This way the other riders will not touch you. 3) when overtaking other riders on bends it's easier to overtake by letting yourself skid onto the grass and then slowly edge yourself onto the road. All these methods work for me.

Stephen and Neil Graham *from Carlisle, Cumbria, reckon they have found a bug in Silversoft's* Worse Things Happen at Sea, *a game they find excellent, if frustrating!*

It is impossible to get into debt! If you try what actually happens is that the score resets itself to zero, but instead of going into minus figures (in the case of being in debt) it goes to £9,999,999 and carries on counting down. Therefore, to get a hi-score on *WTHAS* let all rooms fill with water apart from three and the control room on levels one and two. If you are in debt at the end of a trip you gain profits instead of losing them!! Is it a record then that we scored £95,650 on level one?! Losing robot lives also helps you to get in debt as each costs £1,000.

Getting into debt on the third level and subsequent levels is near impossible however, as the engine blows up if water gets in.

Tips: fill holes that are furthest away from the control room first. After all major leaks are patched start pumping out and then seal off other leakages. During the early part of the crossing leave top deck doors open for easier movement but seal all areas liable to flood as all the top deck may need pumping out. In case of dire peril seal off critical rooms and let them fill up while you pump out other rooms. Supa-step through these flooded areas. Above all, try not to lose robots, they cost a lot, and always keep your energy up for pumping work as staying under water as well as pumping costs you lots of energy.



Worse Things Happen at Sea

The Lords of Midnight *seems to have attracted lots of tips, many of which have gone off to Derek Brewster, who will no doubt print them in due course, but here's a quickie from* **N.R. kirby,** *Waterlooville, Hants:*

To complete *lord of Midnight* you must send Morkin north to the Tower of Gloom, choose then SEEK to find the Ice Crown, but to complete the game you must destroy it, by having either Lorgrim the Wise, Fawkrin the Skulkrin or Farlame the Dragonlord with Morkin at the Tower of Gloom thus giving victory to the free! (PS, I was the first to complete it on July 26th).

Sorry, N.R. Kirby, but we know of people who completed it well before the date you state – one of our own reviewing team for a start!

Andrew Outlaw *from Cambridge has a problem with* Alchemist:

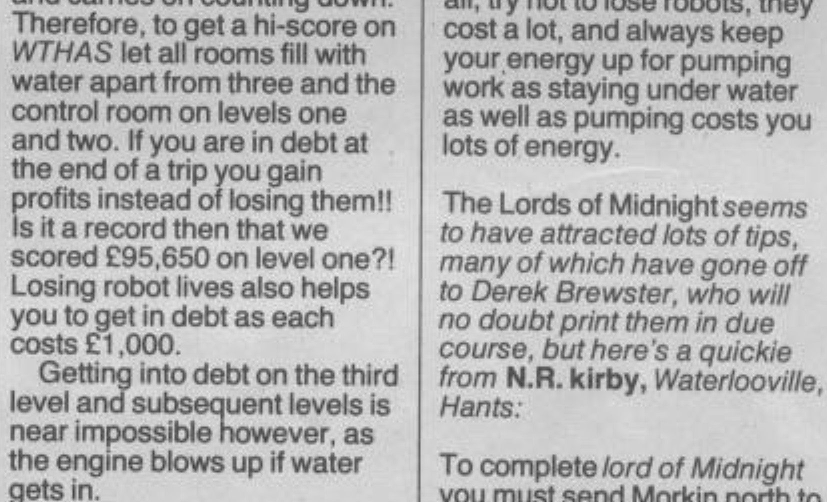
Can any of your readers help me? I've been trying to find the fourth part off the scroll for months, but I've failed every time. If anyone knows contact me by post at 67 Brampton Road, Cambridge CB1 3HJ. By the way, CRASH can only be described as being the only good mag for the non-serious Spectrum owner. Keep it up Mr. Kean (and gang of course)!

i used to be in a gang once, but I hung up my bicycle chain some months ago – it seemed to be giving the secretaries some problems!

Alan Simpson *from Milton, Glasgow, also has a problem, this time with* Lunar Jetman:

On reaching level 45 I was horrified to see the planet break up and many hundreds of small right-angled holes appeared. The moon rover still obeyed commands but moved left and right at a far greater speed. The teleports were very jerky and seemed to move away from jetman. To try and rectify this 'bug' I crashed into the launched missile, losing a life. When the game resumed the planet was

Full Throttle



still full of holes and when I tried to get back into the rover the game froze and 'Sinclair research' appeared on the screen. is this a bug or is it game over? My score was 596,170.

When you're pushing technology to and beyond its known limits, I suppose anything could happen, Alan. Anyone suffered the same explosive fate? **Steve Farmer** *(14) from Thrybergh, Rotherham, S. Yorks, has a few useful POKEs (most of which I'm holding back on for the moment to give the games a chance!) and some tips on* Monty Mole:

First I'd like to congratulate you on an excellent magazine. i particularly enjoy the tips section. *Hunchback*; add POKE 26254,0 to the basic loader to give unlimited lives. I've reached the 17th. screen of *Monty Mole* but I don't know how to pass this screen. For those having trouble with the second railway screen, here's how to pass it. Get into the hanging position on the horizontal pipe at the bottom-left side of the screen, wait until the train is underneath you, then drop onto it and immediately run right to keep on it. If you stop running then you will lose a life. Stay on the train until you go onto the next screen, then quickly move up the nearest pipe.

For those stuck on screens where there appears to be no way out, you must get all the coal from the previous screens, then a wall opens up.

Finally, if anyone is stuck on Phipps adventures *Pharoah's Tomb* or *Knight's Quest*, press CAPS SHIFT and 6 to break out of the program, then type: **LET Room** = Room(plus)1: GOTO 1195. On *magic Mountain*, after breaking out as mentioned above, type: **POKE 23755,0: LET Room** = Room(plus)1: GOTO 1195.

Daniel Varcoe *(13) of Truro, Cornwall has something about playing tennis:*

For those lucky enough to own Psion's *Match Point*, I have discovered a way of cheating. If you select the keyboard option and have a game against the computer, you can move the other player by using keys 6 and 7 for left and right. So you can move him to the other side of the court and serve, and he won't be able to reach the ball in time to return it.

Great, Daniel, it may be your idea of tennis, but it certainly ain't cricket! I think I've already printed a tip for Ant Attack *similar to the next one, but* **Richard Badger** *from Altrincham, Cheshire, explains it well, and it's a good wheeze, here it is again – it's designed to save you going all the way back to the start point to escape having rescued your companion:*

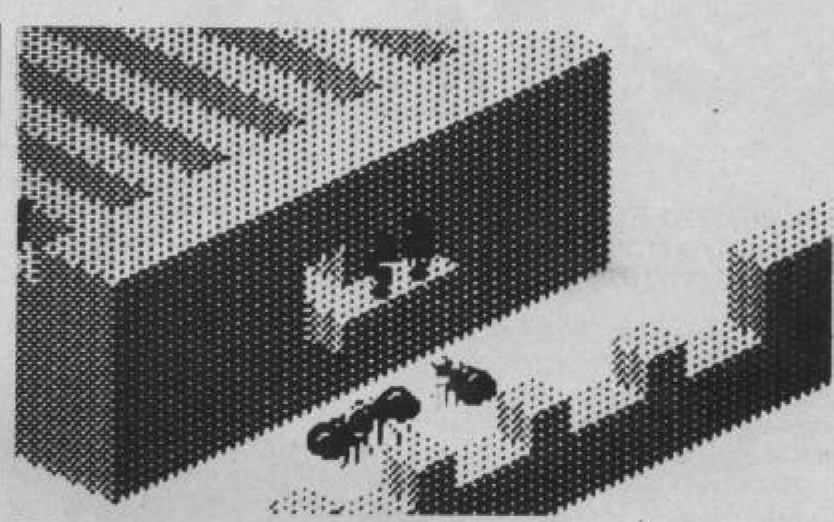
After you have found your companion take him/her to one of the outer walls. Stand infront of one of the lower parts of the wall. Make sure you are facing the wall and your companion is right behind you. Once everything is perfect press V and C. You should then be jumping up and down in front of a wall which looks a bit like the *Hunchback* wall. Keep doing this until an ant comes along and it will get paralysed because you jumped on it. Then this paralysed ant will act like a step and you and your companion will get out with ease. This may sound complicated but there is really nothing to it.

By the way, my friend just got his neatly packaged version of *Formula One* from Spirit, and he says it's as good as *Full Throttle*.

Well I beg to differ with your friend, Richard, I thought Formula One *was rubbish and virtually unplayable.* **J.R. Wilson** *from Hucknall, Notts, who thinks CRASH is a 'Real Smart Carlos Fandango Superbill Mag', whatever the hell that is (!) has a tip for all those players strenuously trying to park Jetman overnight in a safe place:*

All those comments on where to leave Jetman overnight, are silly: the game has a pause button on which a heavy object can be placed (I use a paperweight of the ZX Powerpack).

Now that's what I call real 'state of the art' playing tip!



3D Ant Attack

Mr. Wilson also has a tip for Sabre Wulk *which may help* **Kevin Lewis** *of Birmingham, who wants to know where the various pieces of the amulet are hidden. I actually have a letter somewhere which has planned them all out accurately, but I've misplaced it)sorry)!*

The amulet has only a few possible locations in the jungle. The places where it is hidden are always in a certain pattern, so if you find one piece, you will know where to look for the other three.

And of course, there is the fact that the natives change colour and flash when there is a piece of the amulet in a straight line with them up a path. One tip is to latch onto a native and keep following him until he begins flashing (if you'll pardon the phrase). **Joe McGeever** *(13) from Dalton, Rotherham writes to tell me that:*

In *Jet Set Willy* I have found the three screens which you missed in your map. Firstly you must wait on the BOW until 11.45 p.m. when a raft will drift onto the screen. You jump onto this and are taken to CRUSOE ISLAND. Go up to TREE TOPS – THE SEQUEL and up again into IN THE SKY, at which time things get extremely dodgy.

*Thanks Joe, for the tip. I'm sure it'll prove excellent for keeping people off the street. Anyone daft enough to sit around until 11.45 p.m. deserves to see a raft coming in. You must think poor old lloyd's a country bumkin because he's stuck up here in wildest Shropshire. But even here we occasionally get to see the odd copy of Your Spectrum. They may believe you – I don't – in fact what you say is a load of b******t!*

Michael Hudson *from Bingley, W.Yorks writes on* T.L.L. *by Vortex:*

If taking off from the east to west on the runway do not rise fully into the air, just skim off the ground a little until you have passed the runway, then head north. Do not waste time doing stunts, and do not bother with refuelling – if you are fast enough you can do all the bases without refuelling. Only use the swing wings in an emergency. To destroy bases your altimeter should be on the 4th level from the bottom.

Stuart Ware *from Pentwyn, Cardiff says:*

In *Psytron* stock up with personel on the final level (about 370) because when you run out of fuel, your base is only destroyed by lack of personel, nothing else.

Craig Yeomans *from Manor Green, Willenhall refers to Colin Warner's letter in the may issue about Carnell's (Now Mastertronic's)* Black Crystal:

Firstly, after finding the 2 rings, head to the bottom left part of the screen (forget about entering the castle). Somewhere on the plains is the invisible entrance to the Shagot's lair (map 3). Enter here and it will give you a map reference number for map 3. if you have trouble finding the lair the map reference number

PLAYING TIPS

is 1126671220. Enter this after inputting to the prompt, 'Are you starting a new game?'

I also have map reference numbers for the other maps as follows:

Map 1 – 512661220 – the final stage
Map 2 – 1126690200
Map 4 – 3126641220
Map 5 – 2126671220
Map 6 – 1126290200

J.H.G. Sturgees *(14) of Kingsbridge, Devon, in addition to finding some oddities in the desert around the city in* Ant Attack, *wants to know why:*

After you have rescued all ten girls/boys, you are nominated a HERO, but never a HEROINE, so why are you asked at the beginning 'girl or boy?'

Good question, J.H.G. I guess sex equality only goes so far. **Clive Dancey** *from Milton Keynes modestly writes in to claim:*

I've done it! I must be the last person to have completed *Atic Atac*, and I did it with the help of the map found in issues 6 and 7 of CRASH.

C'mon people – there must be more of you out there who can outdo Clive – own up, who hasn't completed Atic Atac *yet? On adventures Clive has this to say:*

In the *Golden Baton* you must throw the rope over the portcullis. To find the rope: 'In a prickly situation here – chop chop chop and all will be clear'. To find the sword, search the leaves. In *Quest Adventure* by Hewson if you kill the mindflayer in the mountains you will find the long key. But does anyone know what to do with the snorkel in *Circus*?

Clive also wants to know if we can cut down the advertisements and put in more reviews. The answer, as before, is NO. The ads pay for what you get already!

And that concludes this month's Playing Tips. Please keep sending in your ideas, hints, cheats and what not, but before anyone considers it, we have enough POKEs for *JSW, M.M.* AND *Sabre Wulf* to fill the Domesday Book. A lot of these will be appearing in a special edition of POKEs in the Christmas Special CRASH.



Firstly I must thank all those who wrote in with the solution to the security lock problem in *Snowball* and the whereabouts of the pirate treasure in *Collosal Adventure*.

For the first problem **Geoff Forsyth** of Frodsham, Cheshire writes:

"Perhaps I can help you and Stuart Roberts out. To open the security door in the Snowball Hilton you need to obtain the correct security code. When using the Video Viewer, it gives you the coffin number of a crew member who you must find and carry to the nearest revival machine. (Yes, you have to go all the way back to the freezer coffin disks). When you manage to revive the crew member he/she will give you the correct code number to open the security door."

For the latter problem **P. Hoskins** writes:

"In answer to your question in issue 7 regarding the pirate's booty, no it is not a hoax. The pirate's chest is in fact in the 2nd maze (not the one with the vending machine). You can however only find it if the pirate has already stolen an item off you, he will then place this item in the maze with his chest. To find the chest from the corridor outside the maze you go south (the 1st room of the maze) then E,S,S,S,N,E. (You should now be in the room at the top of the orange column). From here go E,NW and 'there it is!' "

One of the major topics of the letters this month has been *Lords of Midnight*. Everyone without exception has described the game as brilliant although some have suggested it is a little easy.

Most adventurers completed the game by destroying the Ice Crown while a few have gained a victory through battle. For those having problems I've included a few hints and discoveries sent in. However you will not find direct solutions here like how to destroy the Ice Crown which would spoil the game.

Stewart Beatt, of Glasgow, who completed the game by battle in 2½ hours writes:

"The only person who can recruit Utarg is Luxor the Moonprince and that is only when his land is under attack. Also a person of one race can only recruit others of the same race, e.g., Free can only recruit Free and Fey can only recruit Fey."

Stewart has found 32 characters. I wonder if anyone has found more?

Jonathan Housden, of Hucknall supplies the following tips:

"Don't fight too much. Doomdark outnumbers you. Defend Xajorkith with Timrath and before you send Lord Xajorkith off bring the citadel's guard up to a 1,000 men. No more, because if you put 1,500 men on guarding a place they disappear. Also go north and you can see a keep in front of you. Protect that because Doomdark will attack it before he invades the citadel."

It's always interesting to read your views on the adventures you've played, even if i don't agree with them! **Robin Glover** of Bristol says:

"*Dungeon* adventure 10/10. This I cannot recommend

highly enough. It is extremely long and contains everything. It is the most rewarding adventure I have ever played. Features range from mushrooms which make you grow to black spheres which chase you. Just buy it! If you are stuck you can always get a clue sheet from Level 9. But don't use it too much.

Lords of Time 9½/10. This is also highly amazing, almost nine adventures in one. It is extremely original and drips with atmosphere. It would have had the full ten out of ten if it wasn't for a few small errors and too hard solutions, e.g. 'eureka' to open a door.

Snowball adventure 8/10. Not as exciting as the other Level 9 adventures. It lacks monsters. It is spoilt by complicated 'light' routines, but still better than most adventures.

Artic adventure D 5/10. Reasonable but spoilt by lack of description and un-user friendly vocabulary, e.g., when I type in 'tie rope to rock' reply is 'to what?'

The Hobbit 8/10. This is a good adventure for the beginners, rather pricey, rather easy and rather bug-ridden. But is has a good vocabulary and makes up for its faults by the fact that there is more than one solution.

Smugglers Cove 6/10. A rather difficult beginning but it has a fast response time and instant graphics. The vocabulary is poor and not user-friendly. On the inlay it says 27 locations and 65 objects. Surely it's the other way round?

Valhalla 4/10. Poor, dull and a waste of time."

Gary Smith of Swindon writes:

"I am writing to give my comments on adventure games and ask for help on some, so here we go.

The Hobbit – superb, a masterpiece among adventures . . . despite the problem if you break the window in the dungeons.

Pimania – No comment.

Artic A-E – never below 'A' standard, would be better with some graphics!

Valhalla – very good, though not quite as good as *The Hobbit*."

In response to **Ron Wells'** comments in the August issue **Simonn Whiting** writes:

"I completely disagree with R. Wells's comment on *Pimania*. I think it is very difficult and witty too. Also I cannot see what is so great about the Artic adventures as I think they are very dull and have no atmosphere in them. maybe I will thinkmore of them when I can dispel the forcefield in *Planet of Death*, go down the sand porthole in *Inca Curse*."

For those who take pleasure in cheating **Mick Tilson** has written a program to translate the coded tips.

SIGNPOST TRANSLATOR

```
20 POKE 23658,8 : BORDER
0 : PAPER 0: INK 4: BRIGHT
1: CLS
30 PRINT "PLEASE WRITE
IN THE MESSAGE"
40 INPUT 1 ; AT 0,0 ; LINE A$
50 FOR F = 1 TO LEN A$
60 LET A = CODE A$(F):
   LET A = A-(1 AND A 32):
   IF A = 64 THEN
   LET A = 90
70 PRINT CHR$ A;: NEXT F
```

The very popular *Mountains of Ket* has been causing a lot of trouble. **Darren Gray** of York writes:

"I am stuck in the excellent adventure *Mountains of Ket*. I have with me the magic wand, sword, etc., but cannot find a way to open the skull mouth or to make a hole in the 'mint conditioned wall'. I have tried 'wave, wand' which just replies 'magic gnomes from the tup'."

Firstly, I would guess that entering the skull is the end of the game, that is, unless the story on the cover of *Temple of Vran* is misleading. To create a hole in the wall try **TBZ QPMP**

In the same game **Mark Sims** is unable to leave the village. Try **TFMMJOH TPNF GVFM**

Greg Deiley asks "How do you get the magic sword. "Well, Greg, try **TXJN MBLF UIFO QMBZ EJDF XJUI UIF PHSF**

A. Norton of Blackpool is having difficulty progressing beyond the pixie caves or across the river in *Fantasia Diamond*.

The river gave me problems for a long time too I'm afraid it can't be crossed from the south. To progress beyond the pixie caves you must go through the trapdoor in the south-east corner of the caves.

Ken Wise from Wantage, Oxford is at an impasse in *Temples of Vran*. Ken writes:

"*Temples of Vran* – "I am having trouble in crossing the quicksand. I think I have to swing on some overhanging branches but cannot reach them, even with the stepladder. There is also a hole in the Wart's caverns about 13ft up the side of a wall. How do you reach this as the trampoline doesn't work and I can't get the stepladder down the stairs. Finally, how do you cross the lava flow in the gorge?"

Ah, quite a few questions here. Firstly, you can't cross the quicksand until you've been through the 13ft highhole in the Wart's Lair. As for getting the stepladder down to the lower section – **MFBWF UIF MBEEFS BCPWF UIF USBQE PPS** then **HP CFMPX BOE PQFO USBQEPPS.** To cross the lava flow you will need **UIF USBNQPMJOF** and **UIF TUFQMBEEFST.**

Stephen Atherton of Workington is held back by the seemingly immovable panel in *Message from Andromeda*. I agree, this really is a tough one! Try **QPJOU SPE BU QMBUF**

Simon Whiting from Colchester is having trouble finding Drapnir, the second quest object in *Valhalla*. Fortunately the solution to this problem was sent in by **S. Bufton** of Harpenden who writes:

"Drapnir is in a strongly locked chest North of Despair. To get it, go to the Pits and give Ofnir to someone else (I suggest Saga or Boldir), and then go east and jump, to Hell. Once there, SUMMON HEL. I find that the best way to summon a character is to do nothing for about 1½ minutes, then summon them. Once Hel has arrived, go north to Despair. Hel will usually follow you quite soon (although it is not stated, you need her help to go north). Once you are in Hell, you will see the chest with Drapnir in. You need someone strong to open it. I find that Odin is usually the most helpful in this respect, otherwise Thor."

Darren Gray of York writes:

"I am stuck in *Velnor's Lair* at the shark pool. I have seen the hidden passage but do not know what to feed the sharks on..Where do you get this food from? Also where is the magic pool of healing?"

Actually Darren, I'm afraid you've been misled. The live food they would prefer is you! Instead of feeding yourself to the sharks you might try **UTF USJEFOU.**

As for the magic pool – **FYBNJOF XBMM UISPVHI UIF OBSSPX DSBDL.**

In response to **Ron Wells'** request for help in opening the portcullis in *Golden Baton*, **Jamie Forster** from Morden informs me it can't be opened. Instead try – **VISPX SPQF** then **DMJNC SPQF.**

Well, that's about all there is for this month. The dawn is breaking and I must hide before the first rays of sunlight penetrate the curtains.

This month's £12 of software goes to **Jonathan Housden** for his tips on *Lords of Midnight*.





ON THE KEYBOARD

As we enter the run up period to Christmas more and more games are in preparation for release. Some of these are only completed just after we go to press on an issue which means that their reviews seem to appear later than they should! In an attempt to overcome this situation and to keep you informed of latest developments we shall be reporting on games which are up and coming, those we have seen but cannot yet review because they are incomplete, in other words – games on the keyboard.



ARCADE HORROR

Coventry-based **P.S.S.**, currently enjoying success with *Frank N. Stein* are releasing *Poltergeist* at the end of September. Play takes place in a house containing fifteen rooms, all of which you must visit in order to successfully complete your task. Each room contains the sort of household items you would expect to find, and these must simply be avoided to cross from one side to the other. So far, so good – unfortunately, as you start to walk, the harmless objects begin to move around – some simply float, others chase you. P.S.S. have provided you with one defence which is a can of Holy Water. If it runs out – and it will – then you must find another can quickly.

Your task is to confront the poltergeist that is causing all this disturbance in your house, and to do that you will need to find several objects, the sort of



thing every ghost buster uses like a rope, two tennis balls, a pen and a camera (if you don't know what they're used for, ask Stephen Speilberg)! In the final confrontation, the poltergeist will need at least a quarter of a can of Holy Water to extinguish it.

Gary Mays of P.S.S. describes the game as being a bit similar in feel to *Atic Atac*, but with a fully 3D display. As a third entrant into their chamber of arcade horrors, *Dr. Acula* is planned. There are also plans afoot (on a somewhat healthier note) to convert *Hyper Biker* to the Spectrum. For BMX fans this game provides six track events with features like table tops, whoop de doos, ramps, speed bumps, ditches and drop offs. Bike control of pedals, handlebars and brakes allows the player to do most BMX athletic stunts like Front hops, speed jumps, wheelies and endos. No date on that yet.



SWORDS AND SORCERY

Perhaps the most ambitious project P.S.S. have yet undertaken is the soon to be released Swords and Sorcery – a D&D graphical adventure which uses a system they have developed called MIDAS (Multi Dimensional Animation System). It's ambitious in scope, but also in the problems of marketing it, because *Swords and Sorcery* is like no other adventure and hard to describe. The game is extremely flexible and 'you' in the game can really be YOU, because you build your character as you go along. So, although there is a built in plot idea to the game, the way it's played is entirely up to the player or players.

You can guide your character through simply unending corridors of the underworld on a quest for material, physical and/or spiritual power – the choice is yours. You could become a good person, you might prefer to be evil, you can choose to be honest or deceitful – it won't matter because whatever you become in play, the computer characters will react appropriately.

The MIDAS System has been developed to allow players to build their own adventures – but this is *not* a utility – not at all – it's a fully interactive adventure language. The result is graphic 3D animation which simulates video disk games, artificial intelligence, a data compression technique which allows enormous vocabularies and scenarios, real time interactive conflicts allowing you to talk to your opponents, attack, flee them or even confuse them. In the main a joystick is used for movement and combat through a menu, although the keyboard can be used as in any ordinary adventure for communicating if time permits. On top of that, MIDAS will allow you to save your character so it can be transferred to future adventures, new opponents and scenarios. P.S.S. have a planned series of expansions modules for *Swords and Sorcery*.

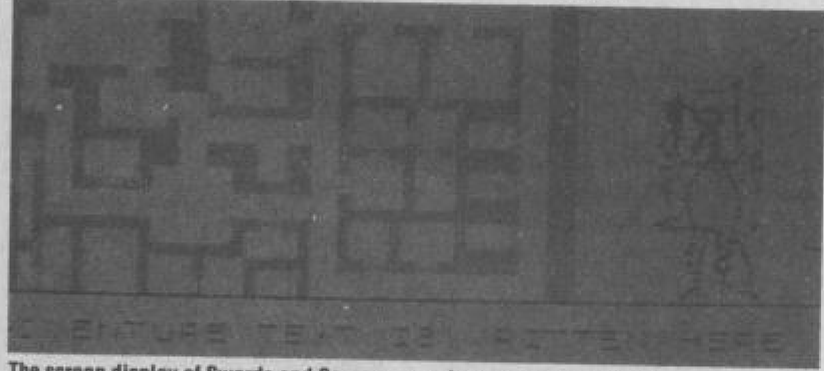
Perhaps the most astonishing single feature is that the player can educate the computer during play. Should you type in a command and receive that all too familiar, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND 'MURDER', via a screen prompt you will be offered the chance to define the word 'MURDER', and from then on the vocabulary will understand the word – only in the way you have defined it of course! So it will pay to know the precise meaning of the words you may be using!

The basic quest behind *Swords and Sorcery* is to locate the various pieces of the lost armour of Zob, which was un-made by its maker. But there are quests within quests, many red herrings and many routes to success. The map seen on screen represents one quarter of a level and there are

three levels. This scenario should keep the player going for some time but you will also be able to add the expansion modules. The first is a two player game using two Spectrums networked via the Interface 1. The best way to play this, apparently, is for the two players to face each other, their screens back to back so to speak, so that they are each seeing a screen view which would correspond to the one they would see in real life. The second module is called *The Village* and includes an oracle who will answer questions, a trading post where you can barter things you have collected for other items you need, an armourer where you can buy weapons, a healer who removes curses and heals wounds, and a house in which you may leave things.

Modules 3 to 6 are four packages designed to give the advanced player more challenging dungeons, quests and opponents.

We'll be reviewing *Swords and Sorcery* and *Poltergeist* next issue. *Poltergeist* is £5.95, *Swords and Sorcery* is £9.95. The expansion modules are expected to be around the £3 to £4 mark.



The screen display of Swords and Sorcery – you happen on the dragon.

TRASHMAN TWO

New Generation the company that cleaned up with *TRASHMAN* has released its sequel *Travels With Trashman*. The new game repeats the formula of high difficulty combined with humour and strong graphics. That, too will be reviewed next month.

ADVENTURE FROM MICROMEGA

If you think of adventures then the name *Micromega* doesn't immediately spring to mind, their having concentrated much more on arcade type games. All that changes, however, with *Kentilla*, a new text-graphics adventure from the pen of none other than **Derek Brewster**. Getting *Kentilla* reviewed has posed something of a problem as it would obviously be unethical to have Derek review his own game in the Adventure Trail! It's upset him to think that he must rely on the CRASH reviewer team to do the job for him! *Kentilla* ought to have appeared as a review in this issue, but as the preview copy arrived within the last ten days of the writing schedule it has proved difficult to do it justice, and it must now wait until next month.

For those who have played Derek's earlier *Velnor's Lair* (Quicksilva), some of the names and situations may be familiar. Once upon a time Grako had grand designs to turn Caraland into a perfect playground of hate, torture, walking dead and eternal darkness – and he almost succeeded. But he was too far from his place of power and was unable to maintain his demonic influence. Grako was finally defeated by the great warrior Ashka and was returned in shame to the fires of the abyss.

Some time later the evil sorcerer Velnor, long since vanquished for the black arts he practiced (see *Velnor's Lair*!), was planning revenge. Hidden in the labyrinth beneath Mount Elk, Velnor had found the Tomes of Grako. The power of eternal life and sovereignty over all he hated was in his hands. Unlike Grako, Velnor was born of the earth not the abyss and so could become a true demon.

Unfortunately this was all part of Grako's plan. The spells were flawed, and during the metamorphosis Velnor's powers were weakened and when he was attacked by the wizard Tylon, Velnor was slain and his soul dragged through the void to the flames of the abyss. For a few moments a pathway was opened and Grako made good his escape to breathe hate once more on the free plains of Caraland. So starts *Kentilla*.

Kentilla is the name of a mighty sword which pops up pretty much at the start as you are plunged into the depths of the story.

Kentilla is an interactive adventure in which you can talk to many of the characters, getting them to help if they are so inclined, and the game sports a number of features that Derek has been promoting in the Adventure Trail basis of any good modern adventure. Preliminary reviewer reports suggest that *Kentilla* will be much in demand, and the Derek has little to worry about!

Kentilla is available now for the 48K Spectrum, priced £6.95



STARBURST NEXT MONTH!

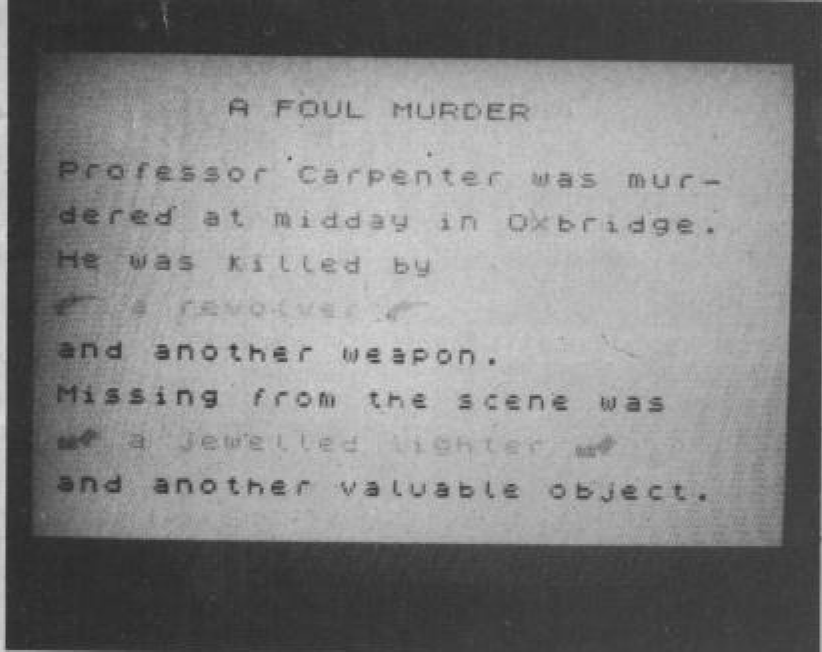
The exciting new company **Realtime**, who gave us *Tank duel*, have been hard at work in Leeds on their latest 3D game. Oddly enough the lads have been working along very similar lines to the Design Design programmer Simon Brattel (see next piece!) but whereas Simon has gone out of his way to show just how astonishingly fast line graphics on the Spectrum can be done, Realtime have concentrated more on moving larger objects in 3D. The new game is due out shortly after this issue hits the streets and is called *STARBURST* (at least, it is at the moment). In effect it is an extraordinary version of the top arcade original 'Star Wars' and features the three main screens. On the first you must fight four types of alien ships which hurtle towards you. The second screen takes place on the 'Battle Planet' with large towers looming. Realtime expect to depart from the original here, improving the screen by also having tie fighters attacking you. The third screen is the dive into the trench, avoiding the side walls, cross stanchions and plasma bolts hurled at you from the guns on the side. It looks very authentic! *Starburst* also improves on the original by having a fourth finale screen. Instead of dropping your missle into the reactor tunnel entrance, you will actually have to fly down into the reactor chamber and destroy the two reactor pods. Depending on finalisation and memory, Realtime are hoping to include a sequence where, if you succeed in knocking out the reactor, you are flung into space, turn around to see the receeding planet, and then it blows up. Screens are linked with sequences of simulated computer tacticals which lead you into the next section.

DARK STAR

Since our interview with **Design Design** and the report on their new game *Dark Star*, the program has undergone some radical alterations prior to its release. The biggest change is the speed – it now has to be the fastest graphical game on the Spectrum. It also has the most extensive front end ever designed for ANY game on ANY machine – it's so user-definable that the player can do almost anything with it – except win the game! Author **Simon Bratell** on a recent visit to the CRASH offices said to us, with the modest charm that characterises him, that he insists on a rating of 100% for Use of Computer. The problem with that is how do we rate his Use of Computer on the next game when he has expanded the front end yet again? The full review will be in next month's issue, as we're a day or so away from being able to review the finished product, but there seems little doubt that it will be a rave.

WHO–DUNNIT?

Producer: **C. C. S.**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£2.99**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **G. L. Griffin**



Whodunnit? requires no clues to guess what the game is about! You have to lead the investigation into the brutal murder of Professor Carpenter, the famous Oxbridge scientist, who was murdered in Oxbridge at mid-day. There are six suspects with names whose initials conveniently fall out as AA, BB, CC, DD, EE and FF, each of a different profession. All the suspects were seen and questioned in separate towns at varying distances from Oxbridge and at different times of the day. You must work out who has and who hasn't got an alibi. All you know is one of the two murder weapons and one of the two missing valuable objects. To make a successful accusation you must get several facts correct, the murderer's name, his profession and the identity of the second murder weapon and that of the second missing valuable object.

Whodunnit? may be played by between one and four players. At the start a two-screen form is provided which may be copied down on paper or printed out if a printer is attached. To play successfully this form should be used. The game takes the form of single questions and answered facts. To start you off a few random facts are given about the suspects, which the players fill in on their forms. Thus one might discover, for instance, that CC is a clergyman and the clergyman is bow-legged. Gradually, a picture of each suspect can be built up.

Play continues along the lines of asking each player a quiz question which generally take the form of simple intelligence test questions. If the question is answered correctly, the player may ask a fact of one of the suspects. Elligible questions include the first and second weapon found on him, the first and second valuable object, town where he was seen, time of alibi, his fastest means of transport, a personal fact about him. Under the heading of personal fact come several important items which may help identify his profession, means of transport and its speed. After this the player is allowed to make an accusation if desired. Between each player's turn there is a free fact given out about one of the suspects or the distance of a town from Oxbridge. Thus, if FF lives in Nether Denton which is 120 miles from the scene of the crime, was seen at 5 pm and owns a bicycle with a speed of 10 mph, obviously he couldn't have committed the crime.
If you want a quicker game, the quiz questions may be ommitted.

WHODUNNIT?



CRITICISM

● 'This is a fairly simple version of this type of game, but difficult enough to be intruiging. It is possible the only one of its type for the Spectrum, so it's got a certain amount of appeal value.'

● *'An early irritation is the need to put CAPS LOCK on8that shouldn't be necessary, even in a BASIC program. Being in BASIC also means that you keep having to press ENTER instead of having the program read your key press directly, which does get annoying when you are playing for a while. Apart from these quibbles, and considering its price, Whodunnit? is quite amusing and involving to play. It's not going to appeal to a lot of computer gamers, I would think, but it's rather a good family game, especially where there are younger children involved. Certainly a group activity anyway.'*

● 'This works on the principle of shaking up a few random facts and shuffling them among the suspects, so in principle each game is different. For one or two goes it manages to be fairly playable, but the appeal soon fades since it is only a question of constant elimination of the facts. The intelligence test questions also lose their value after you've seen the same idea repeated a few times.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: general inputs
Keyboard play: reasonably fast
Use of colour: very limited
Graphics: text only
Sound: entry beeps etc.
Skill levels: 1
Features: 1-4 players
General rating: may be good for young families, otherwise average.

Use of computer	52%
Graphics	N/A
Playability	58%
Getting started	55%
Addictive qualities	48%
Value for money	53%
Overall	53%

ASTRONOMER



Producer: **C. P. Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Paul Marshall (Pi Software)**

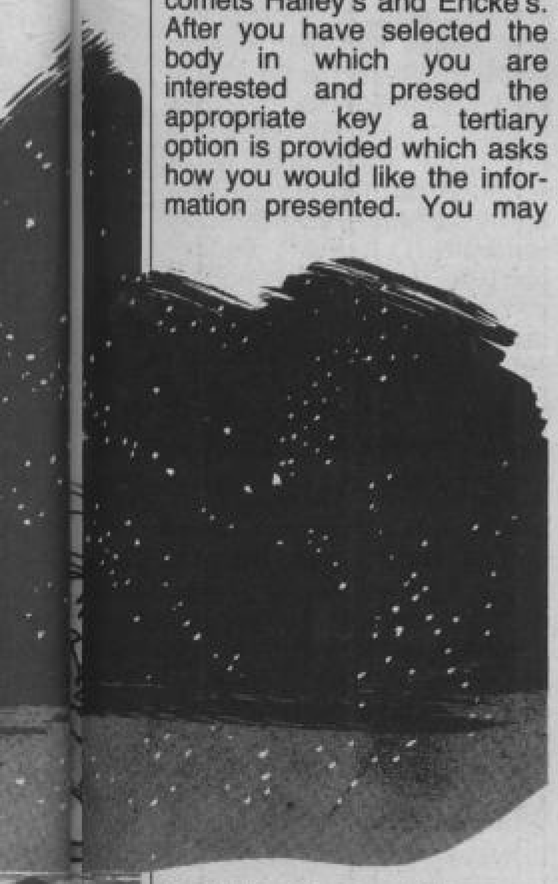
A word of warning first; a review of *Astronomer* cannot be quite like a games review in the usual CRASH sense, for *Astronomer* is not a game in any way. It could be called a simulation, perhaps a practical utility, even educational – boring it certainly isn't. For those interested in the night sky it should prove fascinating, and for those amateur astronomers with smaller telescopes, an interest in computing *and* owners of a Spectrum it should prove invaluable. For anyone thinking of buying a telescope I would recommend spending the asking price of this program first and getting to know your subject thoroughly.

The best way of examining the program is to look at the options provided and the way in which they work. A detailed instruction booklet is provided with *Astronomer*, which runs through the routines and provides information about the stars and heavenly bodies as they relate to the program.

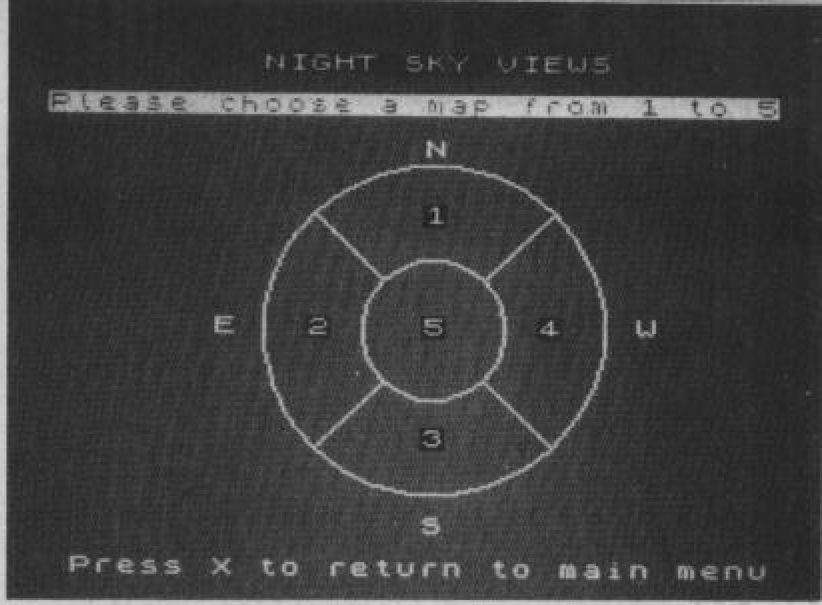
On loading you are presented with a main menu of six

options. The first is CHANGING TIME OR LOCATION. The program has already calculated everything as it was at 23.00 GMT on the 1st of January 1984 in London (longitude Ø° Ø′ Ø″ and latitude +51° 3Ø′ Ø″). In this option, by entering the year, month, day and time in hours, minutes and seconds, followed by the desired longitude and latitude, you can select any place and any time from which to view the sky. Once these details are selected, the rest of the options will calculate everything accordingly until option 1 is altered.

Options 2 and 3 are to CALCULATE POSITIONS OF THE PLANETS, SUN AND MOON, and to CALCULATE POSITIONS OF MINOR BODIES OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM. The two options work identically. Pressing 2 will take you to a secondary menu with numbered options from 1 to Ø (SUN out to PLUTO). X returns to the main menu. Option 3 also offers a secondary menu with the asteroids Ceres, Pallas, Juno and Vesta, and the comets Halley's and Encke's. After you have selected the body in which you are interested and presed the appropriate key a tertiary option is provided which asks how you would like the information presented. You may



tabulate values on the screen (or the printer if you have one attached), or select a single value only. Choice 3 will calculate the position in the sky using the time and place selected in option 1, whilst the first and second options allow you to calculate positions over a range of time from a starting date to be entered, at intervals in days. The number of entries required is the last item, and then the program will calculate them and present them as a table.

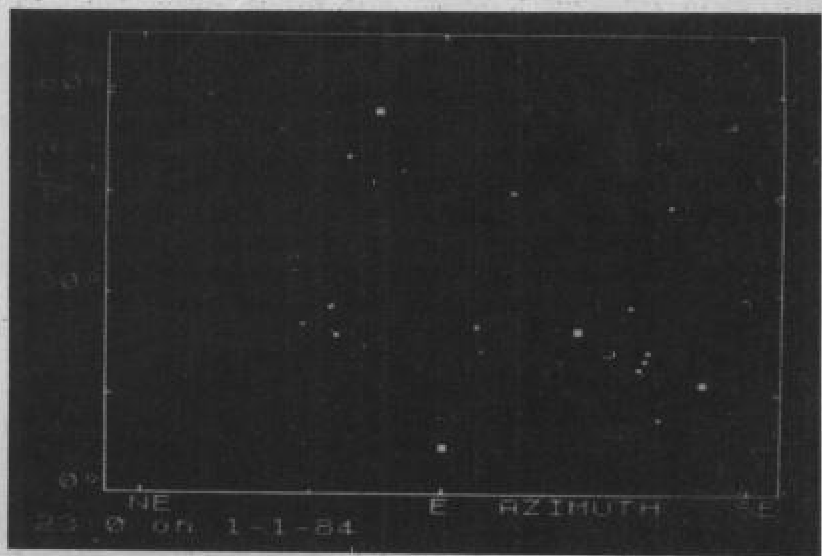


The secondary option menu for selecting your night sky view.

Additionally, option 2 will give information on the distance in astronomical units of a body from the Earth, and it shows the phases of the moon on the selected time and place in option 1.

Option 4 is the NIGHT SKY VIEWS. This section draws the stars which are above the horizon for the time and place selected in option 1. A note of warning here! It takes about eleven minutes to calculate the arithmetic for the 1090 stars included. To save time they have already been calculated for the time and position given at the end of loading, and to start using the program immediately to get to know it, you would be sensible to leave the details in option 1 as they are. Selecting this option takes you to a secondary menu, presented as two concentric circles, the outer ring being divided into four segments, North, South, East and West. The centre circle is the view directly overhead with an altitude of more than 60°. These are numbered 1 to 5. The segment views take 30 seconds to draw and the central view takes 2 minutes. Let's take an example of how this is used (taken from the instruction book in fact). Select 2 (EAST). Immediately a grid appears on screen showing the altitude on the left and the azimuth below. In this case between Ø° and 6Ø° vertically and between NE to SE horizontally. All the stars visible in the segment then appear in three ranges of brightness. Here we can see the constellations Orion and Gemini. Typing in ORI or GEM will result in the constellation being indicated by joined lines. To 'rub' it out, just retype the abbreviation. Equally, as long as a single value calculation on a heavenly body has been made in options 2 or 3, these can also be indicated by a flashing cursor if they are visible. Saturn is visible in the North and is drawn by typing SAT. If the position hasn't been calculated the computer will tell you. Typing MAP will take you back to the secondary option to select another segment of the sky. EXI takes you to the main menu.

Option 5 is THE STAR ATLAS and is designed to give you a closer look at selected regions of the sky, in 362 overlapping star charts. You are presented with a grid ranging from −9Ø° through Ø° to +9Ø° vertically (this is called DECLINATION), and from 24h to Øh horizontally (this is called



The sky at night – beetling eyebrows and scrappy shirt collars are not required equipment. . .

the RIGHT ASCENSION or RA). Using the cursor keys a flashing cursor block may be moved about to select the region desired. By pressing ENTER the grid will appear and the stars are drawn in. As in option 4, you can type in three-letter abbreviations of constellations or pre-calculated heavenly bodies if they are present in the area. On this scale a constellation may spread across more than one sector. A chart is shown in the accompanying booklet with the relative positions of the constellations so that you can find them easily enough.

Option 6, OTHER ROUTINES offers animated diagrams of the solar system. You can see the inner planets (Sun to Mars) or the outer planets (Jupiter to Pluto). The animation can be started from a selected date and seen at intervals (in days) to be selected. Another option here is RISING & SETTING TIMES. This will calculate the times of rising and setting of any object as seen from the time and place selected in option 1.

IN USE

Astronomer is a user-friendly program which appears to have very good error trapping. One note of warning; it is possible to lock the program into an endless loop if you are unwary enough to enter a value of Ø in response to the request for an interval period in calculating tabulations. Program responses are reasonably fast considering the amount of calculations involved, although if you want to alter the given start date, remember that star charts will take eleven minutes to recalculate.

Astronomer should prove interesting to anyone who enjoys star gazing with or without a telescope. One fascination is the ease of calculating the moon's phases on any day in any year, and on this level, the program also has a use for those interested in the more arcane science of astrology. For the telescope astronomer the program gives sidereal values, useful in long term tracking (and again, useful for astrologers). The accompanying booklet is detailed and useful both for the program and the subject in general. *Astronomer* is not expected to replace the stars, but act as an encouragement for looking at the real thing. As such it seems very good value for its price.

ROGER KEAN



EIGHTS

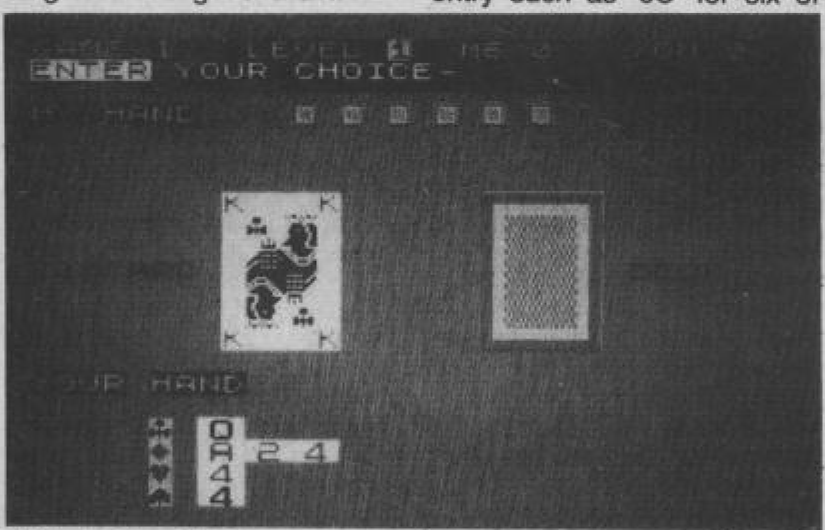
Producer: **Atlantis Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**

Exciting Intelligent Game hard To Stop playing (once you've started) – says the loading screen. That isn't the reason, however, for calling this reasonably well known card game Eights. The game is for one player against the computer. From the standard 52 card pack, the computer deals the player and itself seven cards. The player may decide whether t go first or second. Your seven cards are shown 'face up', the suits in a vertical row and the denominations ranged to the right of them.

The remaining cards from the dealer pack remain on the table as a pick up pack. The object of the game is for the first player to lay down a card on the discard pile. The second player must then lay down a card of either the same suit or the same denomination as the first player's card. It is then the turn of the first player to lay down a second card – and so on. If a player has no suitable card he must pick up from the deck, and continue to do so until a useable card is collected. Any card with a denomination of eight is 'wild'. An eight can always be played, and then the player may specify the suit which his opponent must play next.

The game continues in this fashion until the deck is finished, with the last cards indicated by a number telling you how many are left. If you cannot go after the deck is finished, you may pass a go and hope to be able to follow next turn. The game ends when one player has got rid of all his cards. The winner's score is determined by the added values of the cards held in the opponent's hand. A series of games are played until one player reaches a total of 100 points, when the scores are displayed for each.

The screen layout shows the score lines and information box at the top. This shows the game number, skill level being played (there are 5), scores and entry box showing what is being played to the discard pile. In the playing area the discard pack is shown with the last card played visible, next to it is the pick-up deck. Above are the blank backs of the computer's hand, so you can see how many cards it holds, and below are your cards held in the hand. Entries are made by keypress, usually a dual entry such as '6C' for six of clubs.



No King to follow a King, but you do have the Queen of clubs to play.

The inlay has a note on the computer cheating, pointing out that the game would be unplayable if it did – so it doesn't!

CRITICISM

● *'Eights has a somewhat uninteresting inlay cover, which is a pity because it holds no hint of how interesting the game actually is. In fact I would go as far as to say that this is the most interesting card game implementation I have yet seen for the computer. A lot of this has to do with the fact that the game itself is an interesting solo type game, but it also reflects the way the program has been done. Everything moves quite fast and the graphics are clear and easy to understand. I would say that Eights is a worthwhile addition to any collection, to while away some of those empty moments with a hand of cards, and it doesn't cost that much more than a good deck anyway.'*

● *'Card and board games have been tried on the computer many times, but often seem to fail because in the end it is much easier to drag the real game out and play it rather than play it on the computer. But Eights seems to have overcome that problem. The screen layout is excellent – clear and to the point, the playing cards are well drawn, and decisions are made quickly. The card game itself is very playable, and overall great value for money.'*

● 'This is one of the fastest simulated card games for the computer I've seen. Some of the earlier Pontoon type games suffered from not having all the proper features of the game, but *Eights* seems complete and the computer plays a mean game even on level one. Card simulations are perhaps not the most vital of computer games, but this is a good one and at only £2 seems well worth buying.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: denominations use numerics to 9 then T,J,Q,K and A. Other keys are for the suits, C,S,H,D and D is also used to draw with X to pass
Use of colour: can't really go wrong, but very nicely used
Graphics: sharp, clear, well designed
Sound: not much, just warning beeps
Skill levels: 5
General rating: an excellent card implementation, being an interesting one-player game with the computer and good value for money.

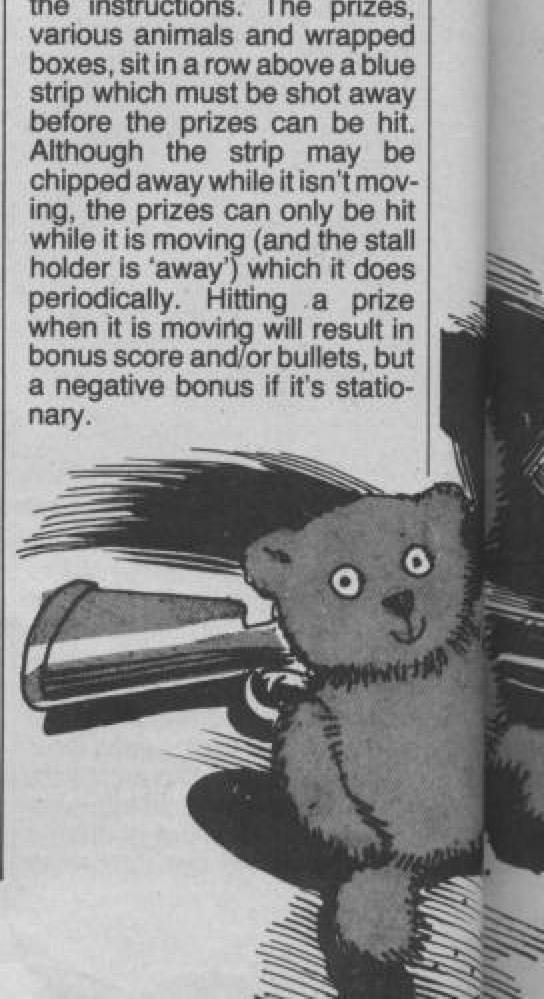
Use of computer	75%
Graphics	72%
Playability	68%
Getting started	73%
Addictive qualities	70%
Value for money	80%
Overall	**73%**

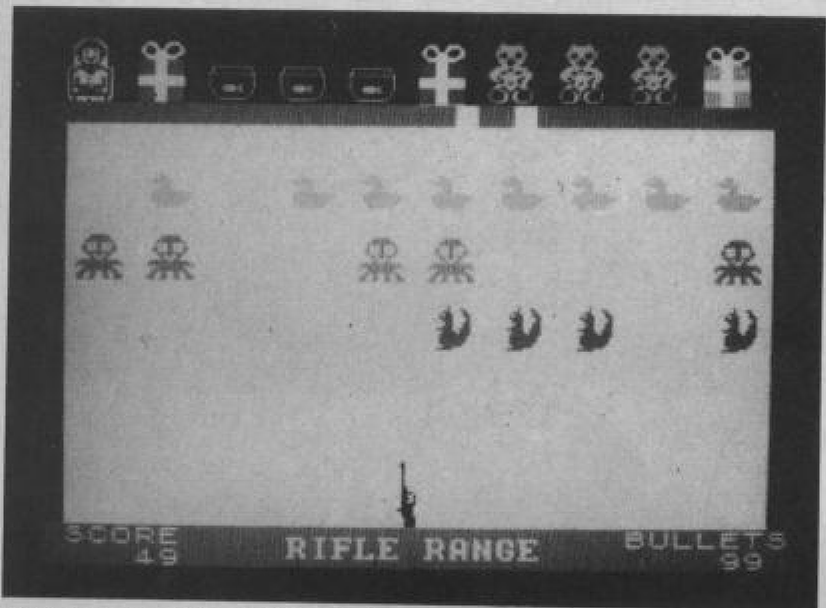
RIFLE RANGE

Producer: **Masteronic**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Andrew & Peter Foord**

The aim of the game (as the inlays says) is to have a good aim in life and shoot all the animals to clear the screen. Each animal scores a point and there are three rows of 32 animals each. Bonus points may be gained by shooting the prizes at the top of the screen unless the stall holder is present in which case the bonus will be negative. Completing a screen will award 20 points and leads the player to the bonus screen where you must shoot as many roller coaster cars as possible to gain extra bullets on the next screen. On the main screen the shot squirrels will begin to reappear if you take too long. Shooting the stall holder is called murder and will lead to your arrest and the end of the game.

Masteronic's *Rifle Range* is not quite as simple as it sounds. The program was written by the people from Mr. Chip Software, better known, perhaps, for their Commodore software. Loading the game reveals some further sophistications than are apparent in the instructions. The prizes, various animals and wrapped boxes, sit in a row above a blue strip which must be shot away before the prizes can be hit. Although the strip may be chipped away while it isn't moving, the prizes can only be hit while it is moving (and the stall holder is 'away') which it does periodically. Hitting a prize when it is moving will result in bonus score and/or bullets, but a negative bonus if it's stationary.





The stall holder is at the extreme top left of screen – shooting him is called 'murder'. . .

CRITICISM

● 'I found that this game had a good difficulty level – one that will make you want to play it again and carry on. The game itself is fairly unusual and quite playable. Graphics are large and move smoothly, they are also colourful and have the added bonus of being detailed. One of the better games from mastertronic's range. Good value for the price, but it doesn't compare with more expensive packages. I noted that the man at the top hardly ever disappeared, making the game more tricky.'

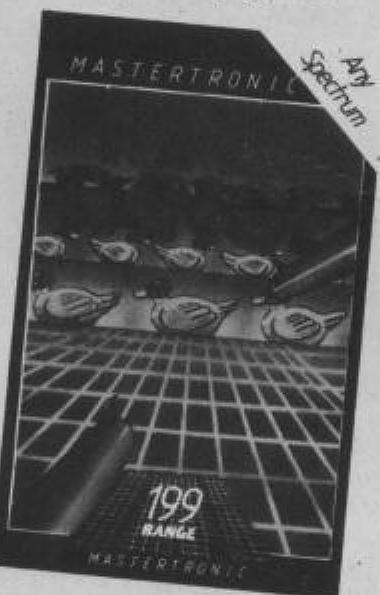
● 'Rifle Range *has a curoiusly relaxing pace to it despite all the shooting. It looks simple at first, indeed it is, but it isn't easy to get rid of all the animals, especially when the squirrels start multiplying off screen and you're waiting for one more duck which you know is going to reappear any second. Hardly a great game, but certainly at about £2 probably worth it.*,

● 'The overall finish of *Rifle Range* is very good, with much more polish than many a program at three times the price. The game itşelf is very simple, but oddly compelling for all that. I haven't thought all that much of Mastertronic's El Cheapo range, but this one is worth the asking price, bearing in mind that it isn't a major game in any sense of the word. Fun for a bit, though.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: 6/7 left/right, 0 for fire
Joystick: none, but actually a ZX 2 will work with it
Keyboard play: good, responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: smooth, detailed, above average
Sound: good tunes, otherwise poor
Skill levels: 3 – 150 bullets, 150 bullets with acorns, 100 bullets with acorns
Lives: 1
Screens: 2
General rating: good value for money, average game.



Use of computer	62%
Graphics	62%
playability	63%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	58%
Value for money	69%
Overall	64%

GIANT'S REVENGE

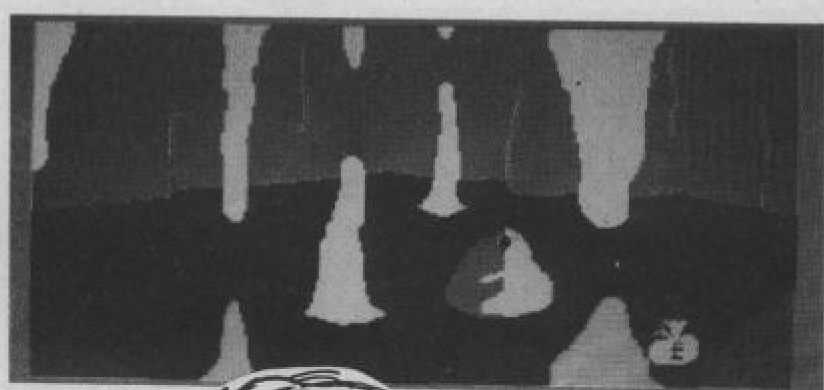
Producer: **Thor**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Chris Kerry**



Giant's Revenge is a follow up program to Thor's *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Like *Jet Set Willy* it comes with a colour code anti-copying protection device. Unfortunately, and unlike *Jet Set Willy*, this card is so badly printed that it is hard to distinguish some of the colours except under ideal lighting conditions. The pale blue (cyan) and green are almost identical and hard to decipher unless either side by side or seen in bright light. Also, unlike *Jet Set Willy*, you are only allowed one go at a correct entry which seems pointlessly mean and silly when one is talking about a four to five minute loading time. This makes getting started a little frought. On the other hand, you are treated to a very fast run through of all the screens you are about to tackle, which is colourful and useful.

The scenario goes that Jack is bored after his defeat of the giant until one morning he notices a hole in the ground left by the giant's fall. Entering, Jack discovers that the giant isn't dead at all, but has built a complex of caverns under the ground where he now lives. Giants everywhere have this odd habit of accumulating treasures, and Jack must go and collect them, including the







Elixir of Life.

Giant's Revenge takes the same graphics and game idea as *Jack and the Beanstalk*, where you must walk Jack around seven screens, finding the correct route and collecting the one object on each screen before being able to get onto the next. The principle difference here, is that there is no fire to halt the various meanies found on each screen. The screens start off outside Jack's house and descend via a ladder into the first of the caverns; this is followed by a long cave with stalactites, then some planks over a pool, a large room, some stairs down to the cellar, the foot of the giant's bed and finally to the giant himself at the bottom of the beanstalk roots.

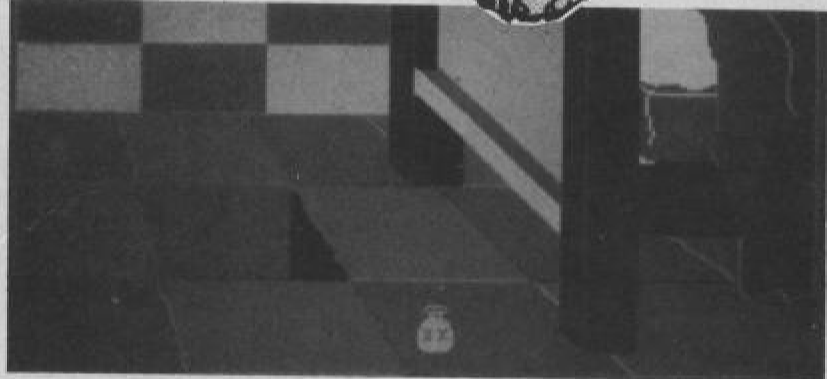


CRITICISM

● 'The less said about the colour code protection the better. At least the inlay for this game states quite boldly that you cannot get off a screen without an object, so you shouldn't waste time with that one. Throughout, the graphics are very colourful and well drawn. But like *J & TBS* the way you are killed off for getting near to the edge of the screen is not really a game element – it just makes the game less interesting to play because it's so damned irritating. If you liked *J & TBS* then you're bound to like *Giant's Revenge*, as they are pretty much identical. On the other hand, as a follow up it's disappointing that nothing new has been done. I found it more frustrating than addictive.'

● *'Giant's Revenge is as hard as the previous Thor game because the allowed route is very narrow. But it's fun to play and makes you want ot go on. Fortunately the nasties all follow the same pattern each time, so it becomes easier to work out how to avoid them. The seven screens are very colourful and attractive, which helps make the game playable. Addictive if you can stand the pace.'*

● 'The graphics are certainly lovely to look at, but I don't think they work all that well in the game. It's hard to work out why you get killed by touching a monster because sometimes you don't and sometimes you do. You can walk Jack right through a collectable object and fail to get it, and the sort of 3D drawing makes the game as confusing to play, or as imprecise to play, as *Jack and the Beanstalk* was. The real element of playability is finding the right route through each screen, and this adds some addictivity to it, but seven screens don't seem very much these days, even with varied graphics and I think that lowers its value for money somewhat.'

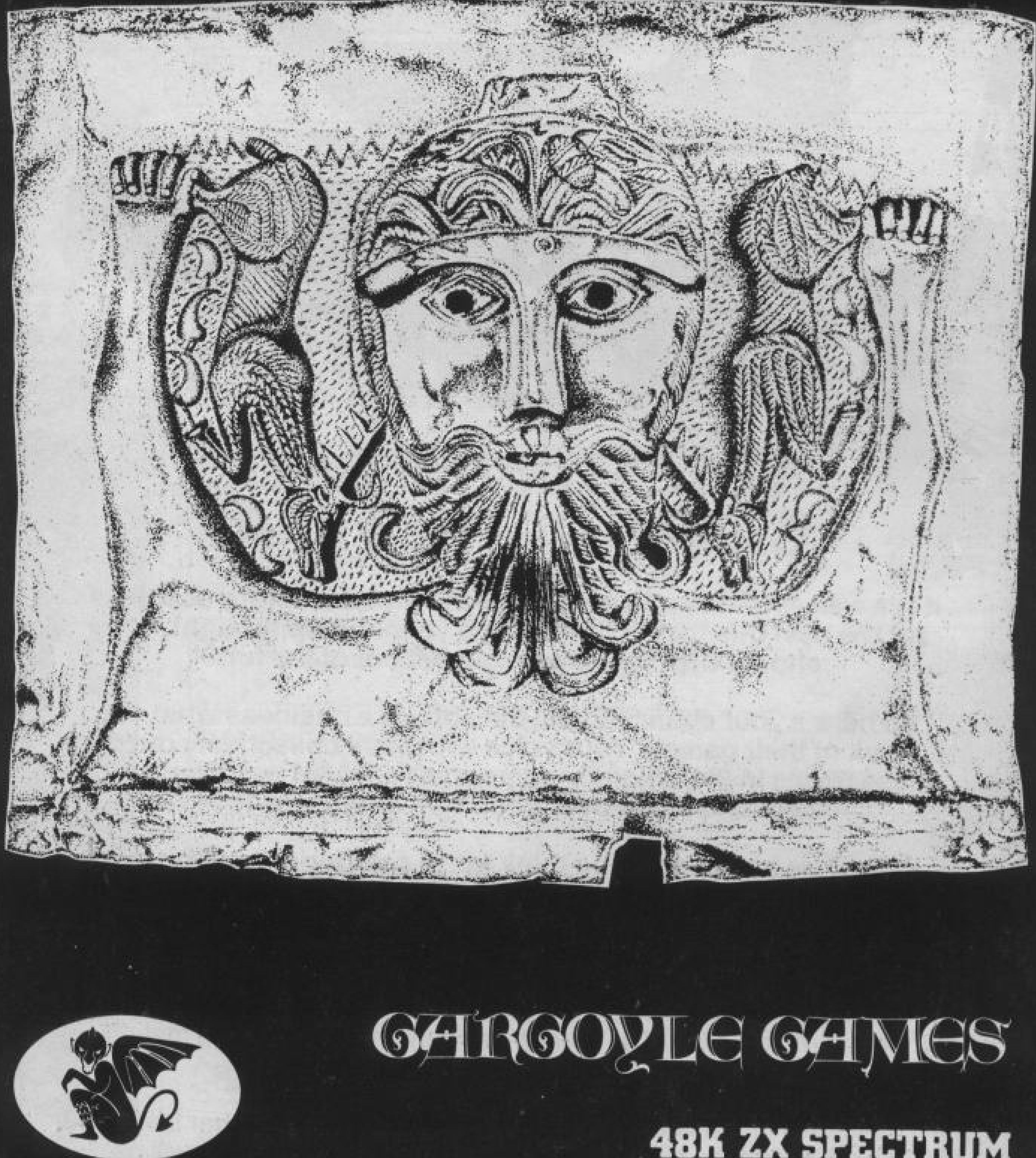


COMMENTS

Control keys: well laid out, Q/W left/right, O/K up/down, P to jump
Joystick: Kempston – annoying it's not mentioned on the inlay though
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good, with a few attribute problems
Graphics: very good
Sound: continuous tune and effects, a bit slower with microspeech
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 4
Screens: 7
Features: Currah Micro-speech compatible and voice effects
General rating: a great looking game that somehow lacks real playability.

Use of computer	70%
Graphics	78%
Playability	55%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	61%
Value for money	63%
Overall	**64%**

TÍR NA NÒG



GARGOYLE GAMES

48K ZX SPECTRUM

Tir Na Nòg – the land of youth, the other world.

Tir Na Nòg – the kingdom of the sidhe, the home of dagda's cauldron.

Tir Na Nòg – a vast and complex adventure, in a magical celtic landscape.

Tir Na Nòg – a most stunning visual experience, with state-of-the-art film animation.

Tir Na Nòg – a true computer movie.

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

READERS AWARDS



VOTE FOR THE BEST GAMES OF THE YEAR!

It is a well established tradition for the press to award accolades for the best this that or other of the year and we thought, 'Why should CRASH readers get left out of the fun?'

So here's your chance to tell the software business what you think of their games! Your voice will reach collectively out of these pages in the uniquely democratic CRASH way and inform the world of the best Spectrum games for 1984.

What we have done is to think up 15 categories, and on the facing page there is a large form to remove from the magazine. This should be filled in as indicated and sent back to us as fast as you can. At CRASH we are not only democratic but inimitably generous too – so the first 15 forms drawn from the bag on the closing date will earn their senders a voucher for £10 worth of software and a CRASH T-shirt – so sending in your form makes sense!

The results of the voting will be published in the December issue of CRASH and the highly valuable certificates of accolade will be awarded soon after to the winning companies, amidst a suitable fanfare of traditional glossy magazine hype – can you resist it!







BEST PLATFORM GAME
Title — Producer

BEST MAZE GAME
Title — Producer

BEST SHOOT EM UP
Title — Producer

BEST (OVERALL) ARCADE GAME
Title — Producer

BEST TEXT-ONLY ADVENTURE
Title — Producer

BEST TEXT/GRAPHICAL ADVENTURE
Title — Producer

BEST SIMULATION
Title — Producer

BEST STRATEGY-SIMULATION
Title — Producer

BEST WARGAME
Title — Producer

BEST BOARD/CARD/PUZZLE GAME
Title — Producer

BEST STATE OF THE ART AWARD
For the most outstanding progamming achievement of 1984
Title — Producer

BUMMER OF THE YEAR
For the most outstandingly bad game of 1984
Title — Producer

BEST UTILITY PROGRAM
Title — Producer

BEST HARDWARE ADD-ON
Title — Producer

BEST LOOKING ADVERT TO APPEAR IN A MAGAZINE
For a Spectrum product
Ad title (or description) — Company

CRASH READERS AWARDS

Most of the categories are self-explanatory, but by **Strategy/Simulation** we mean games like **Dictator, Dallas** etc.

You do not have to vote in every category if you cannot think of anything suitable, but obviously, the more you do fill in the better.

Forms should be returned to **CRASH READERS AWARDS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** to arrive no later than **Monday 22nd October**, when the draw will be made.

Name ....

Address ....

....

Postcode ....

Voting Form

Please cut this page from the magazine (or send a photocopy if you prefer – we will accept written entries on your own paper as well as long as they are laid out in the same manner as this form) and send it back to us as soon as possible. **Don't forget to put your name and address on the form in clear handwriting!**

In each category please enter the name of the game/product and the producer for which y ou wish to vote. Please note; games **must** have a copyright date of 1984 to be elligible. The collated results will be presented as a winner of the award with two runners-up.

DIX MILLE

Producer: **C.C.S.**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£2.99**
Language: **BASIC & machine code**
Author: **G. W. Lewthwaite**

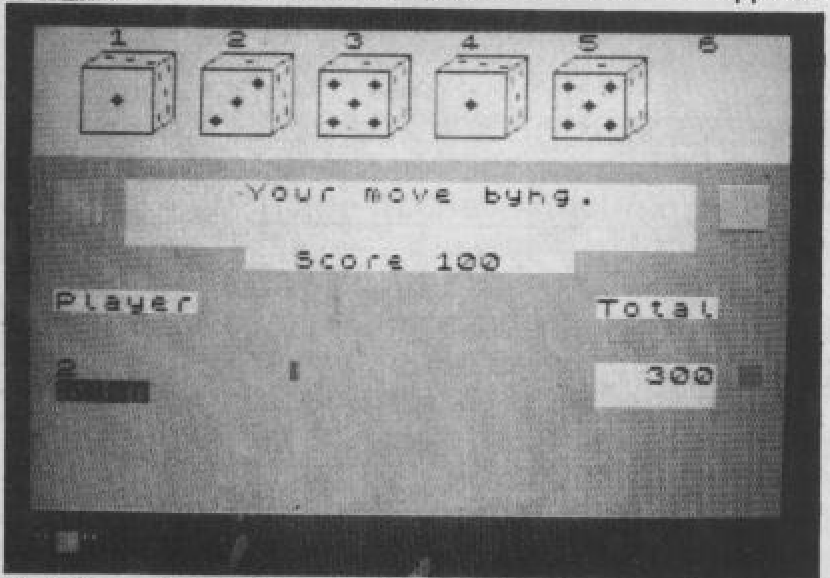
Another game from the *Charlie Charlie Sugar* budget range, an another board style game – this time with dice. For experts in the foreign tongue *Dix Mille* should present no problems, but for those who don't know that Calais is only forty minutes from Dover by hovercraft, it means *ten thousand*, and that's the points you're expected to score in this dice game.

It can be played by one person against the computer or by up to six players with the computer looking after the dice and scores. Each player is given six dice to 'throw' and the object is to score points by getting winning combinations of dice. You score 50 for any five, 100 for any one, 1000 for three throw the six again. There are bonus points for successfully throwing only one die. The game ends when all players have had the same nuhber of turns and one has scored at least 10,000 points.

The screen display has a strip at the top for the six numbered dice, and below it an information and scoring area which prompts the players. Players names can be entered at the start of play. Incorrect or invalid entries are error trapped and an explanation of the fault given. If a winning combination happens to be the first, third and fifth dice in the row, the entry is simply made as '135'.

CRITICISM

● 'This is another game which is very simple to play but which relies on the intrinsic interest of the simulated game. As a game *Dix Mille* is interesting, although it isn't so much fun as a solo game. What makes this program so effective is the way the dice are portrayed. When you 'throw' each one appears



Nicely drawn and animated dice are a surprise treat in Dix Mille.

ones, 3000 for a combination of 1-2-3-4-5-6, 1500 points for three pairs and 100 x the face value for three of a kind. Should you score a flush or three pairs your six dice are thrown again.

After the first throw the player must 'take' at least one scoring dice and then throow the remainder or pass to the next player. Any scoring combination (eg. a one a five and a five) may be removed before throwing or passing on. Obviously the less dice there are to throw the less likely the chance of getting a second scoring combination. If a player manages to remove all six dice successfully, then he may

in 3D, spinning round until it settles, getting bigger all the while. It's an effect that works really well and is a constant delight to watch. Quite a bit of thought must have gone into it, because you can see the three sides of a thrown die and they are always accurately presented with the right number of dots showing on each side.'

● Dix Mille *(Francais for ten thousand) is a sort of poker dice game. It's concept is simple in design. I found it challenging to play and relatively addictive. If you have any interest in dice games like this then you will be hooked. With the player options it should make an excellent party game.'*

● 'This isn't exactly what you would call an essential computer game to own, but it did keep me at it much longer than I thought would be the case at first. It's all quite nicely done, with rather good graphics for the dice being thrown, and you don't have to wait around at all, as everything happens very fast. Don't make the mistake I made at first of playing a truly solo game. If you want the computer to play against you, you must enter its name as ZEDX, otherwise the computer will allow you to carry on playing and scoring for ever and ever. An interesting dice game and at the price well worth the money.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: numerics plus 't' for throw and 'p' for pass
Joystick: not needed
Keyboard play: very respinsive and fast despite BASIC entry routine
Use of colour: very limited
Graphics: simple, but effective 3D dice and throw
Sound: simple beeps
Skill levels: 1
General rating: above average, mildly addictive in one, probably a very good party game, and good value for money.

Use of computer	63%
Graphics	49%
Playability	72%
Getting started	68%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	70%
Overall	**65%**

STRANGELOOP

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Charles Goodwin**

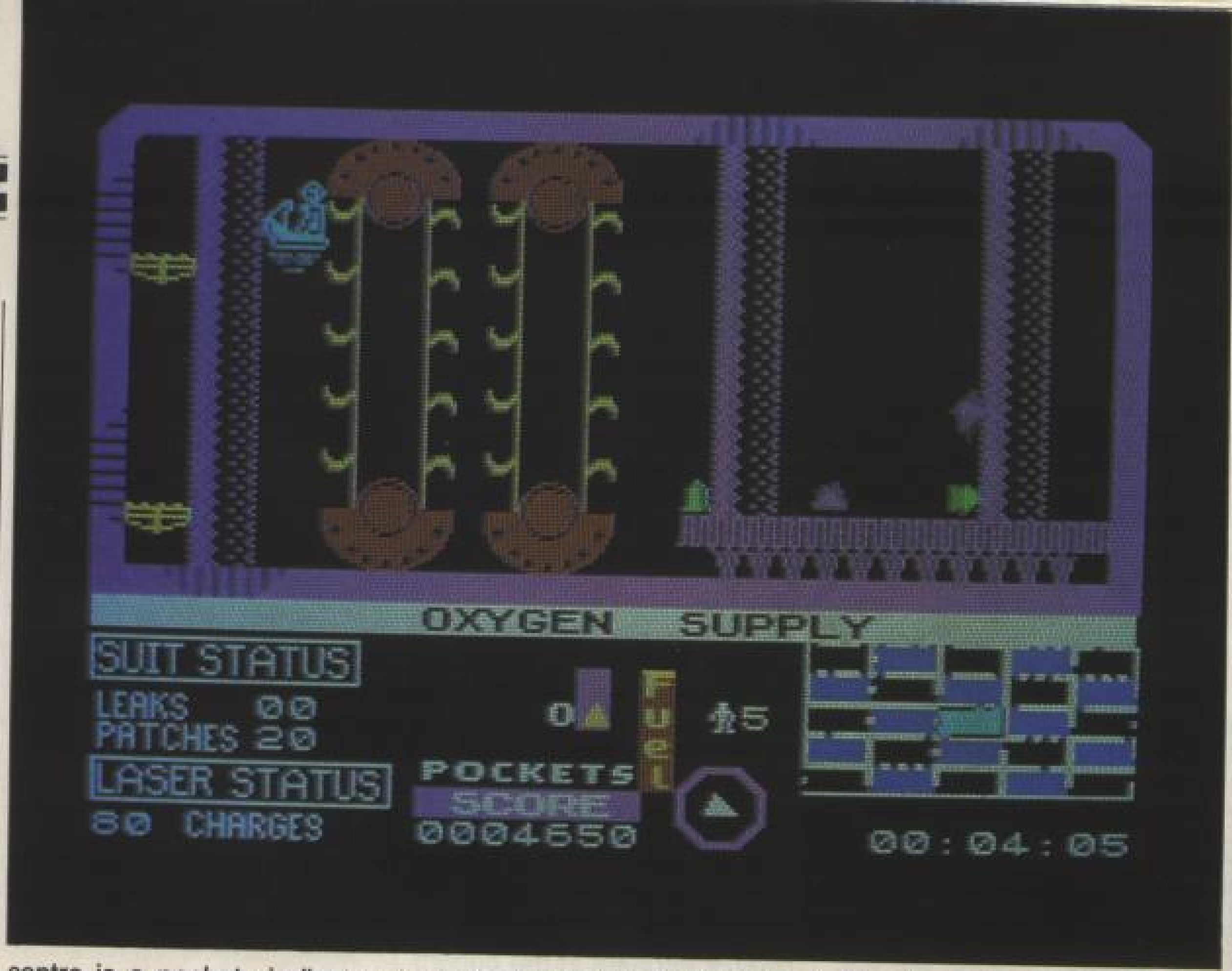
As Christmas approaches, Virgin Games are on the warpath again, with a new batch of games (of which this is the first), new programmers and a totally new look in packaging. Gone are the broad stripes, in comes a game-specific cover and detailed instructions, very free of hype.

Strangeloop is certainly an auspicious start – a mammoth arcade adventure style game with 240 rooms to explore. Your mission is to regain control of a robot controlled space factory which has been taken over by aliens who are reprogramming the robots to destroy Earth. No maps of the factory exist, indeed no man has stepped foot inside for over 100 years. All you know is that the environment is desperately hostile, no oxygen, no gravity, very high temperatures and razor sharp industrial waste (swarf). The object is to reach the central control room, but this isn't just a case of stumbling around until you find it. There are many obstacles to overcome, many objects which must be collected to help you on your way.

Your equipment is a space suit and a laser which fires straight ahead or diagonally upwards. The laser can carry a maximum of 99 charges, and these charge packs are one of the more vital objects that you could find lying around. Another is the jet cycle which has been left behind from a previous service of the factory. This is a bit old and thirsty on fuel, so keep an eye out for fuel cans. The swarf, being razor sharp, creates leaks in your suit, which releases your precious oxygen even faster than it should. But patches are something else that is to be discovered.

The screen display is split into two unequal halves, the larger, at the top, being the playing area representing one of the 240 rooms. These have a variety of industrial equipment in them, all robot controlled of course, various exits which are indicated as semicircles cut from the thick screen edge wall, and the razor-edged swarf flying about. Here, also, can be seen 'you', a large character in your space suit.

Below the playing area is the status panel. On the left is the suit status showing numbers of leaks and patches held. Then the laser status showing how many charges are held. In the



centre is a pockets indicator. Here any useful objects picked up are shown and may also by used by selecting them with SPACE and the direction keys. Fuel level is indicated for the jet cycle if you are using it, your lives left and a compass which always points in the direction of the control room. Finally, there is 5 by 5 grid of the rooms immediately around you, with yours in the centre. This shows the exits in the 25 rooms. A magenta room indicates Megaswarf is present, one with the jet cycle symbol indicates the presence of the cycle, and a yellow one is the control room.

Each life starts with you in the teleport, a square which may be moved with the direction keys to the place where you want to materialise on the screen. Because of the size of *Strangeloop*, a SAVE and LOAD facility is provided.

CRITICISM

● '*Strangeloop* has a wonderful loading screen which appears very quickly because of the 'Flash Load' system. When you start to play the game you'll find it hard to describe because it's not a platform game and it's not really an arcade adventure as such. It's a – well, I'll let you decide. Even though it's a baffling game at first, it's very good and smooth and the sound is good too. This game is certainly fun to play and addictive if somewhat difficult to understand at times. It's sure to be a hit with almost anyone. All in all, a great program and a turn about from the people who brought you *Yomp*!'



On the conveyor surrouded by Swarf

● 'Strangeloop *is one of those games that take a long time to find out everything. It comes with very detailed instructions, but these only scratch the surface. They don't warn you, for instance, about the vile vats of green liquids that kill, nor the floors that open up beneath you. They don't tell you about the various tempting things that could be useful like the Vend-o-matic machine (but where's the money to put in the slot), and although they tell you that robots can be given objects you may be carrying for them to use, they don't tell you why you should want to. In fact, it's a great mystery of a game with colourful, varied and well animated objects that makes you want to find out more. In play,* Strangeloop *doesn't let you down, because it's immediately exciting and fun.' One for a long time playing and therefore addictive.*

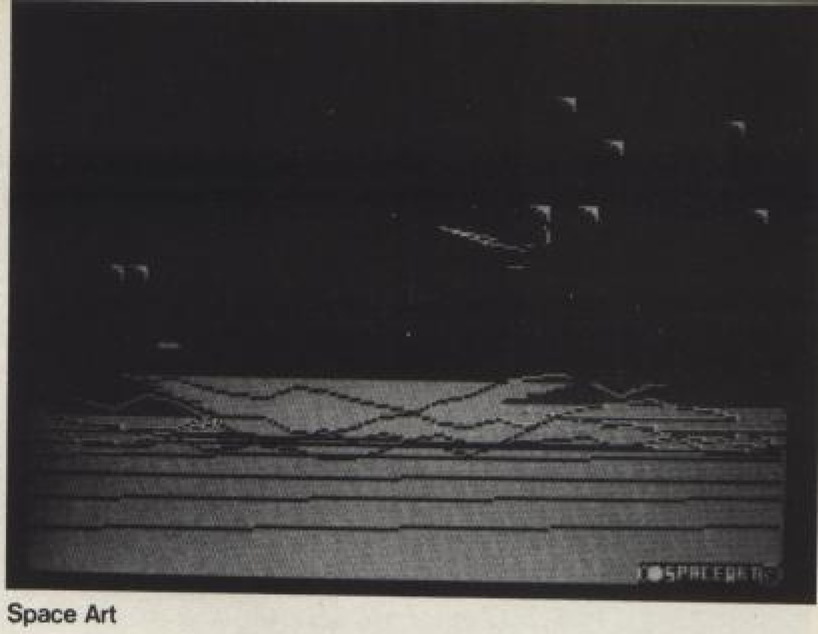
● 'The teleport start to each life is very useful an addition, as it avoids you entering a new life in an instant death position (like in *Jet Set Willy*), and actually offers an advantage because you may position yourself up above an otherwise impenetrable platform that before you died you couldn't get around. So there is actually, at times, a tactical reason for getting killed off! IT would be hard and unfair to criticise *Strangeloop* in a short space because there is a lot going on, and it will take me quite a bit of time to get to the bottom of it, but I will, because I want to. This is the very best game Virgin have ever put out for the Spectrum, both in content and in looks. There are nice touches too many to mention, including the comic style written comments. Highly recommended by me anyway!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: preset as cursors with 1 to fire horizontally, and 0 to fire diagonally, but all keys are

user-definable, SPACE to activate
Joystick: almost any via UDK, but a twin-fire would be useful
Keyboard play: responsive – control takes getting used to (no gravity don't forget)
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: very good
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 6
General rating: an involved and involving game, with plenty of playability and challenge.

Use of computer	86%
Graphics	87%
Playability	82%
Getting started	89%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	86%
Overall	**86%**



Space Art

SPACE ART

Producer: **Eclipse Software**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£2.95**
Language: **machine code and BASIC**
Author: **M.V. Gavin FRAS**

Space Art is a genuine oddity of a program. It isn't a game, it isn't really a utility, although the pictures generated by the program can be merged with the user's own programs if required, and it isn't an astronomer's reference guide.

Its author, M.V. Gavin (Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society) has created a program that is a form of computer auto-art. Various features have been used to create an endless supply of visuals connected with space. These features include a sun and its reflection in the sea, the Northern Lights, planets, moons and Saturn in various phases, a space platform, starship, various spacecraft and Jet fighters. Nearer to home the features include a distant city of the future, desert, sea and headlands jutting into the sea, and mountains.

The drawing is designed to give a 3D effect, which works very effectively on some of the pictures. The pictures take between 10 and 50 seconds to appear depending on the complexity of the elements, and watching each one build up is half the fascination of this program. Remember those items on children's television where an unseen hand makes a drawing appear as if by magic?

Eclipse refer to this program as a 'kaleidoscope', and it's a good description of the effect. There is literally an endless stream of images being generated from the visual vocabulary, none of them the same. Each picture remains on the screen for six seconds after generation. This speed of turnover has rather good commercial potential for clubs and shops as a window display material. While it is on screen a prompt appears at the bottom telling you to press any key if you wish to save the picture. Should you do so, the prompt changes and asks you to give a file name to the picture for later loading. When this has been typed in, pressing any key will allow you to save the data to tape if you have one ready in the cassette recorder. The moment saving is complete the computer gives a beep and busily gets on with the task of building the next picture. This beep is especially useful if you have a monitor or television with a powerful interference field which destroys the quality of the recording, and has to be turned off during a SAVE. The saved SCREENS can be loaded back at any time into the main program by BREAKing *Space Art* and typing in as a direct command:

FOR F = 1 TO 10: LOAD "" SCREENS: NEXT f

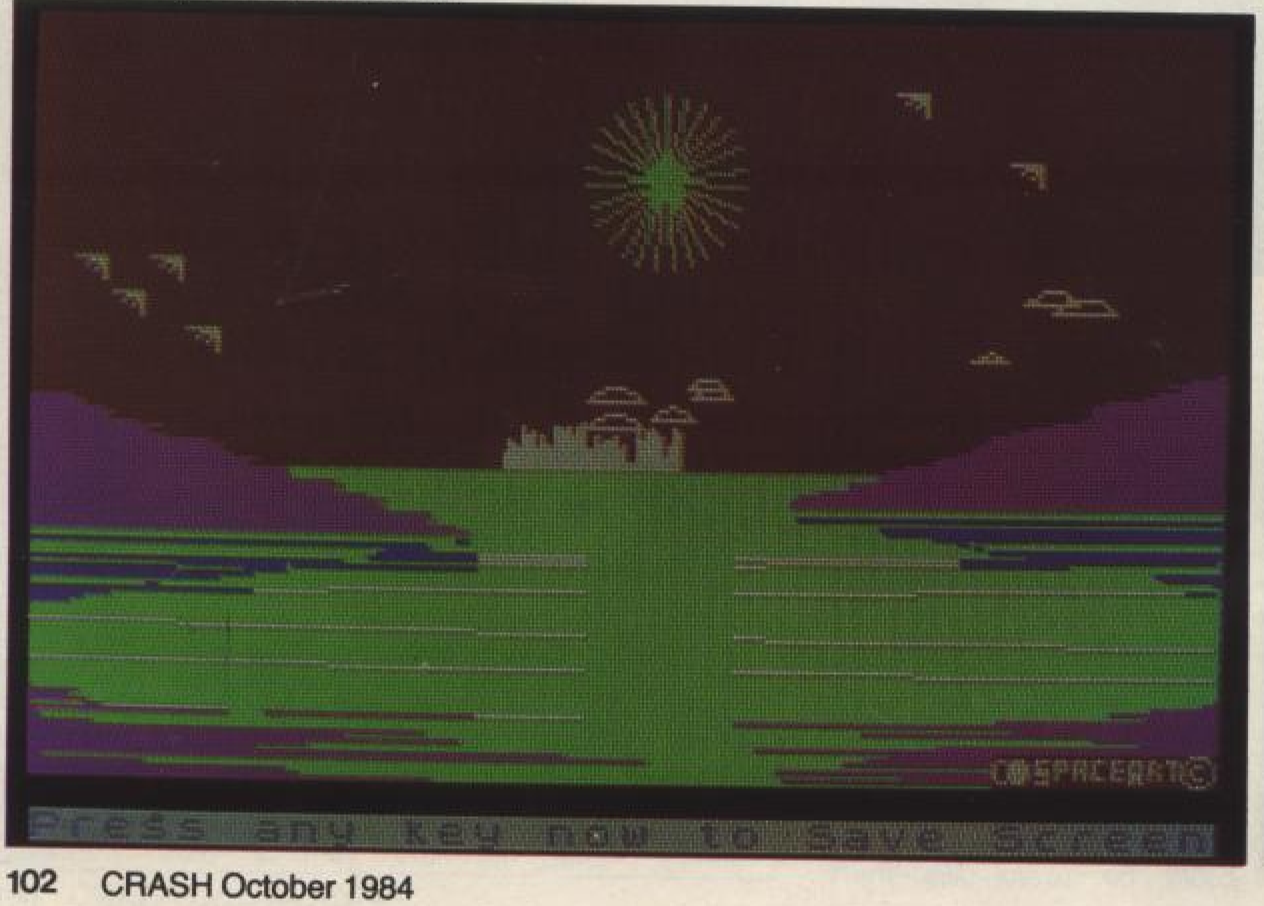
then pressing ENTER. Restarting *Space Art* is done by using RUN ENTER.

Independent of *Space Art* the SCREENS can be loaded using *LOAD""CODE*. In this way they could be used as title SCREENS for home written programs if a suitabe one fits the program.

Space Art is certainly an oddity and it does have limited application for the general user, but it is fun to watch, some of the images are genuinely surreal and it is capable of generating a picture of beauty. If it had been highly priced it wouldn't have been much use to anyone, but at £2.95 it may well appeal to many who want to use the pictures in title screens or use them as guides for drawing up their own, or, perhaps, those who just like watching pictures appear.

ROGER KEAN

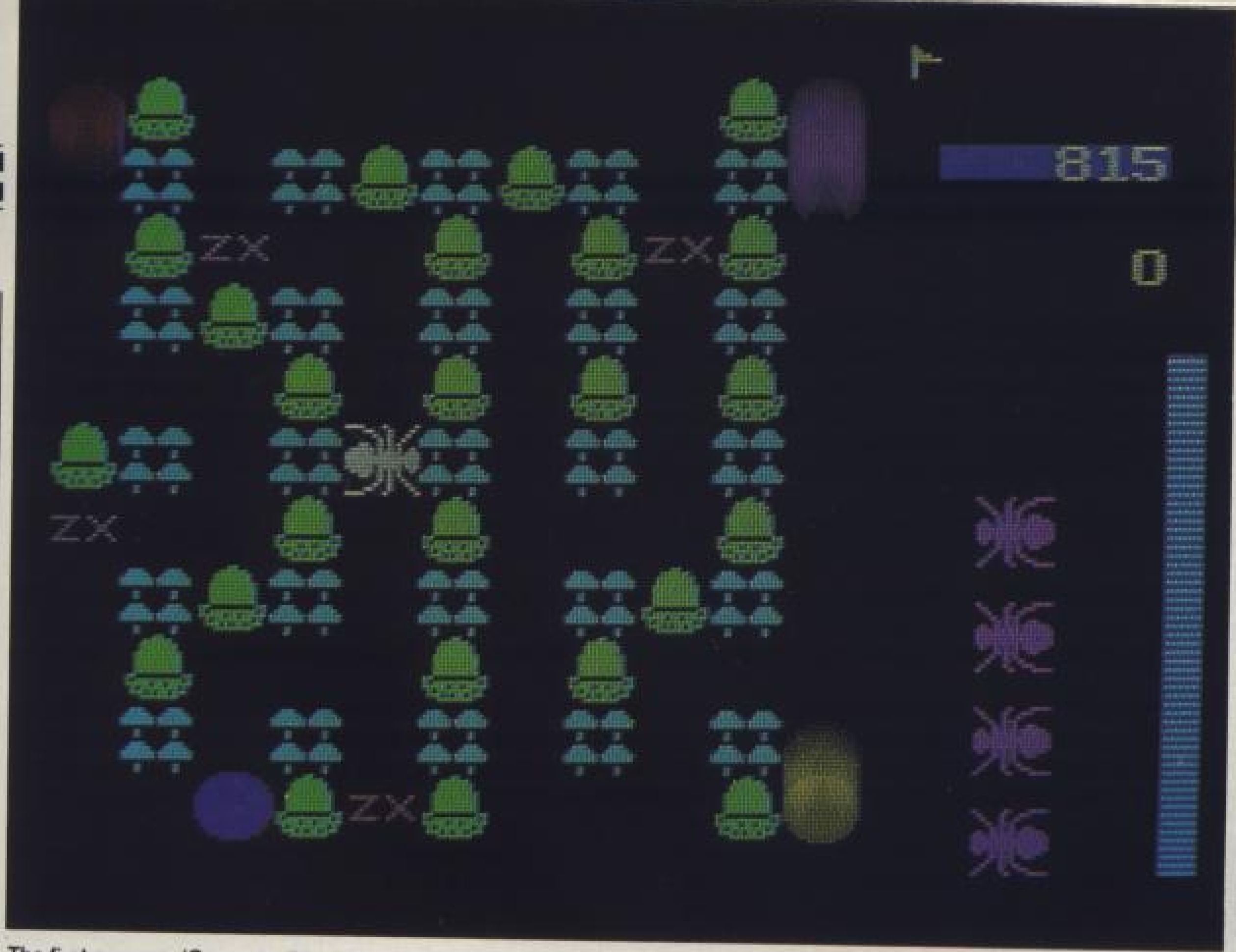
One of the many screens from Space Art



HYPER-ACTION

Producer: **Silversoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Iain Hayward**

Silversoft produced a highly successful oddity of a game in *Worse Things Happen At Sea* – a recent CRASH SMASH. Now they return to more traditional arcade pastures with *Hyperaction* – the name of the game is in the name of the game, a fast and furious compi-



The first screen, 'Snapper Trapper'

lation of ideas which have been put together in such a way that they transcend the individual ingredients.

If you want an identifying slot for *Hyperaction*, then it would be Pengo meets Pacman, a randomly generated series of mazes in which certain of the square blocks can be pushed or burned away so that 'you' can score points while avoiding the chasers. What is attractive about *Hyperaction* is that each maze is in effect a different game with changed game rules.

Sometimes, having collected the objects on screen (usually four), you may have to make your way to the centre of the screen and a flashing block to get to the next level, sometimes just completing the task like eating all the blue in Artic Jellyfish, is enough. Each screen has its own title like Snapper Trapper, Artic Jelly - fish,The Hampton Nightmare, Return of the Jelli, and so on. One rule which is standard is that you must not push a block over a useful or colectible item, nor over a chaser, or you lose a life. This means you have no weapons and must survive on skill, speed and a good eye. Another point is the time limit for each screen, which affects your score, and that all important hi-score overall. If it runs out completely then you lose another life.

Pushing the blocks around is simple enough using direction and fire. The blocks, unlike in a Pengo game, only move one square per push, so they can be used easily enough for tactical blocking. Should a block meet another block or the screen edge, then a further push will burn it away.

CRITICISM

● *'Hyperaction* is a good old fashioned action arcade game, but its a lot tougher than most you'll find on the arcades, and although it is old fashioned in the sense of being a sort of Pacman and Pengo or Freez'Bees, it isn't at all old fashioned in the sense of YAWN. In fact it's one of the most challenging games I've played for ages. For a start off, the graphics are marvellous, large and fast as well as detailed, for another the chasers are very, very intelligent, and once one is on your tail you're as good as dead. Strategy is the only tactic to use, moving the blocks about to trap the chasers. I like the fact that each screen is different – I don't know how many there are because I haven't got through more than four at this point – but that fact alone keeps you wanting to have one more go to see if you can get onto another screen. A simple idea that is very playable and maddeningly addictive. Great!'

● *'Beautiful colours and lovely, well animated large graphic characters which move smoothly, make this a very playable game. In fact the colour is just spot on. This is a very difficult game and well worth the money for the hours of fun it's going to provide, and I certainly haven't got all the way through yet by any means. The sound has been well used as well to add to it. A good combination of two older game types to make a new modern one.'*

● 'Hyperaction certainly means what it says! Frustrating isn't a word I've used to describe a straightforward arcade style game forages, but this one definitely is! The combination of no defence and chasers that are as mean as any I've ever seen makes it a sweaty game to play. The fact that you can't squash your pursuers make life very hard, and there are a number of times when I've lost a life because of that natural reaction to try and get one of them. All the graphics are excellent, and the way the mazes are generated for each screen is a delight. I liked this game very much.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, O/K up/down, 0 to push
Joystick: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Keyboard play: very responsive and good positions
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: varied, large, smooth – very good
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5
Screens: many
General rating: highly addictive, an original mix of twoolder ideas that makes for a playable, hi-scoring game, and good value for money.

Use of computer	77%
Graphics	82%
Playability	89%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	91%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**84%**

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KOKOTONI WILF

Producer: **Elite**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**

Elite is the new company name for what was Richard Wilcox Software, who produced *Blue Thunder*. *Kokotoni Wilf* is their first release under the new name and is set, according to Elite's advertising, to match or best *Jet Set Willy*.

Kokotoni Wilf is the name of the hero in this multi-screened game with 63 locations, and you play Wilf himself. Legend has it that several hundred years ago in a province of Northern Europe there lived a Great Magician, who discovered that there had once existed a Dragon Amulet, fragments of which had been scattered throughout time. The Great Magician wanted to recover all the fragments, but by the time he had made the discovery, he was too old to undertake the mission himself. So he summoned his athletic protege, Kokotoni Wilf, gave him a pair of wings, and sent him off in search of the fragments. First of all, the Magician sent Wilf back more than 500 million years to a time when Dinosaurs roamed the earth.

The object of the game is to search for the various pieces of the amulet, which resemble glowing Stars of David, some 63 pieces, and then when all the pieces have been found and collected from one time zone, the Magician has enough strength to create a flashing timegate which Wilf must find and enter to get to the next time zone.

There are six time zones – 965BC, 1066, 1467, 1784, 1984 and 2001, and between 10 and 12 locations within each time zone, which are linked in a maze fashion. Each time zone has its own distinct graphics from the period. In the first there are dinosaurs, pterodactyls and saurians, etc. In 1066 there are Conquerors, long bows and warriors; alchemy makes an appearance next, followed by the Spanish main period. 1984 is represented by townscapes, starting off with Trafalgar Square. And 2001, of course, is full of Moon stations, shuttles and space paraphernalia.

Wilf is controlled very simply by a left/right key and a flap wings key. He has no weapons, and must survive by avoiding the various obstacles and hazards which kill on contact. These tend to follow strict patterns of movement, left to right, up and down, travelling in a diamond shape and so on. As the time zones progress, the amulet pieces are to be found in harder to reach spots. Exits from any location, which may be up, down or sideways, often lead into dead ends, or dangerous spots.

When Wilf has collected the fragments, he has to make his way back through the maze to a spot where the timegate will be flashing and run over it to enter the next zone. Elite are running a competition for the first 100 people to finish the game. On completion of the last screen a message is printed up telling the player why the Great Magician sent Wilf to recover all the pieces of the amulet, and it is this that Elite need to know for you to be a winner. The prize will be a free copy of their next game, the officially licenced version of the 20th Century Fox TV Series, 'The Fall Guy'.



Two of the time zones from Kokotoni Wilf



CRITICISM

● 'This is an odd game in that the further you get into the many different levels, the more playable and attractive it gets. Graphics on the first time zone are well drawn and move nicely, although there aren't many to give the average games player much trouble. Further on in the game this changes. Pieces of the amulet require much more skill to collect until the point is reached where even one or two pixels can mean the difference in collecting part of the amulet or losing a life. Graphics and use of colour also improve as higher time zones are reached. You look like something from the clouds with the nice flapping wings, and you move smoothly and fairly quickly (about *JSW* speed) across the screen. This game has a fair amount of content, although the main thing is seeing the many different screens. Overall, a progressive skill type game with plenty to see and to do – worthwhile buying.'

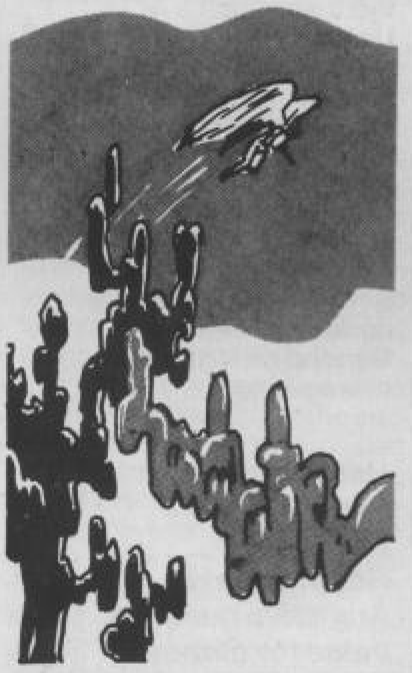
● *'Yes, you are WILF! No ordinary Wilf but a very unordinary Wilf with wings! (Well, if you can have Wallies, why not Wilfs)? Elite seem keen to promote the comparison between* Kokotoni Wilf *and* Jet Set Willy. *Well it does have elements of* JSW *except that Willy jumps and Wilf flies. This does give a quite different feel to the game and it may be argued that strategical jumping is harder than flating around to collect things, but Elite have ensured that some of the amulet bits are very hard to get at indeed. Where it also resembles* JSW *a bit is in the way the time zones are like linked rooms of a maze complex, also that you have to 'learn' your way about each zone to avoid the nasties. I like the idea of having different time zones, because it means the graphics change with every screen and that adds to the addictivity. A good looking game, quite hard after the first screens, and very playable.'*

● '*Kokotoni Wilf* is an excellent platform type game with maze overtones and lovely graphics. Wilf can fly (nice helicopter noise from his wings) and walk. He can also bang his head on the roof of a cave and get stuck in a crevice at the most awkward moments. The animation and design of the various hazards is very good. One thing you're not told is that inanimate objects of certain colours kill you off if you bump into them – but I won't say which as that would spoil the fun. It's nice to be able to access all three of the first screens, because once you've mastered those you don't want to have to keep wading through them again if you get killed off on a higher level. Overall, an enjoyable and addictive game I thought.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, 0 to fly – screens 1 to 3 may be accessed by pressing the appropriate numerical key
Joystick: none, but control keys are best anyway
Keyboard play: very responsive, well laid out
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: neatly detailed, varied, smooth pixel movement, generally very good
Sound: good flapping sound, overall a bit limited
Lives: 6
Screens: 63
General rating: a novel looking game which employs well tested routines to make it addictive in play.

Use of computer	82%
Graphics	88%
Playability	83%
Getting started	83%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**84%**



AHHH!!!

Producer: **C.R.L.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Adam**

Ahhh! Here we go again – fasten your seat belts for the far uncharted regions of shoot em up space. The alien might is about to onslaught once more in this fast action game. Your mission is to clear the six sectors of the galaxy of their violent inhabitants. Your craft, naturally, is of the latest type, armed with a kill-o-zap laser and experimental anti-matter cloaking device. Use of the cloak does use up precious fuel however, as those who have seen *Star Trek II* will know.

Each of the six sectors contains three waves of attacking aliens and after each sector you must dock with the supply ship to refuel. Fuel and laser temperature gauges are shown on the sides of the playing area. The laser ceases to work if it overheats until time allows it to cool.

In play, as you may have already guessed, *Ahhh!!!* is a galaxo-variant with your ship moving left and right at the base of the screen and firing upwards at the jigging aliens, each wave of which are different in appearance. These enemy craft get lower and lower in random patterns, some of them dropping bombs. When three waves have been successfully defeated, the screen cuts to a shot of the refueling ship above your craft, which automatically moves upwards of its own accord, while you must guide it into the docking bay to refuel.

Ahhh!!! is Currah microspeech compatible, and this device makes the most of the arcade effects, with vioce warnings about laser temperature.

Hawk wings beat again in Ahhh!

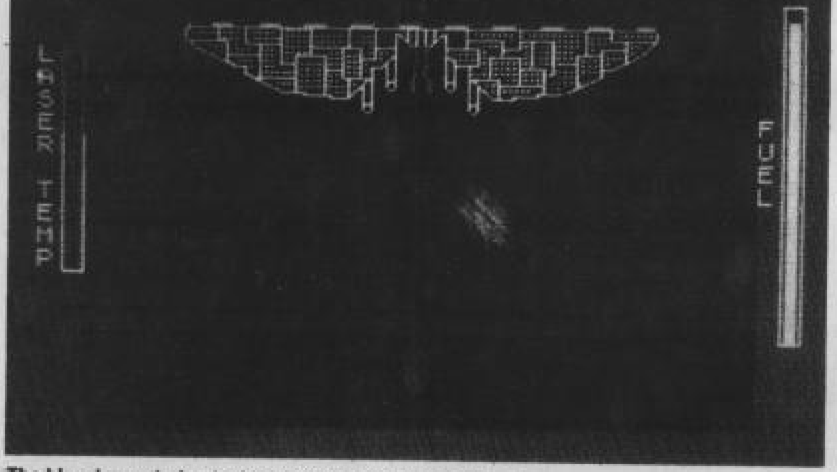




CRITICISM

● '*Ahhh!!!* is a fast shoot em up game with graphics that are large, fast and well animated. The sound could have had a little more action or a couple of tunes to liven things up a bit. There are 18 types of alien in separate waves, and as you progress onto higher levels there are larger numbers of them. I found the shield pretty unusable because, as with most shields, it's hard to use it in time and it also uses up a lot of fuel. The one thing that really annoyed me was the key positions, which at first I thought were alright, but after about half an hour's play, my hands and fingers started to ache. I didn't really enjoy this one as it becomes a bit boring just shooting, dodging and cursing the shield button.'

● *'Typical shoot em up game here which is rather fast. After much playing I realised this was a good thing as anything less would be boring by today's standards. There's a bit of variation in the docking sequences. Generally the graphics are up to the standard one expects now and this is a fairly good shoot em up. In a way it's similar to* Arcadia, *although not quite as good! After enjoying this game I realised that there is still some life left in the shoot em up category.'*



The blurr is you trying to dock with the refuelling ship above.

● 'This must be one of the fastest solely shoot em up games I've played for a long while – it's speed, in fact, is reminiscent of *Arcadia*, although it doesn't play the same way. The graphics are large, very colourful and fast with a reasonable variation of alien types. Like so many of these post-Galaxian type games, I found it became boring after a while, but what can you expect from a simple shoot em up? If you want one, then this is reasonable. The addition of Currah speech does add a lot to the otherwise limited sound effects.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/3 left/right, Ø to fire, 0 for the shield
Joystick: not really essential, none provided
Keyboard play: responsive, reasonable positions, although one reviewer found them tiring after a while
Use of colour: well used and variable
Graphics: large, fast with a reasonable amount of animation
Sound: good with Currah, a little thin otherwise
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: 18 waves plus docking screen
General rating: above average shoot em up.

Use of computer	63%
Graphics	70%
Playability	60%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	59%
Value for money	47%
Overall	**61%**

TERRA-HAWKS

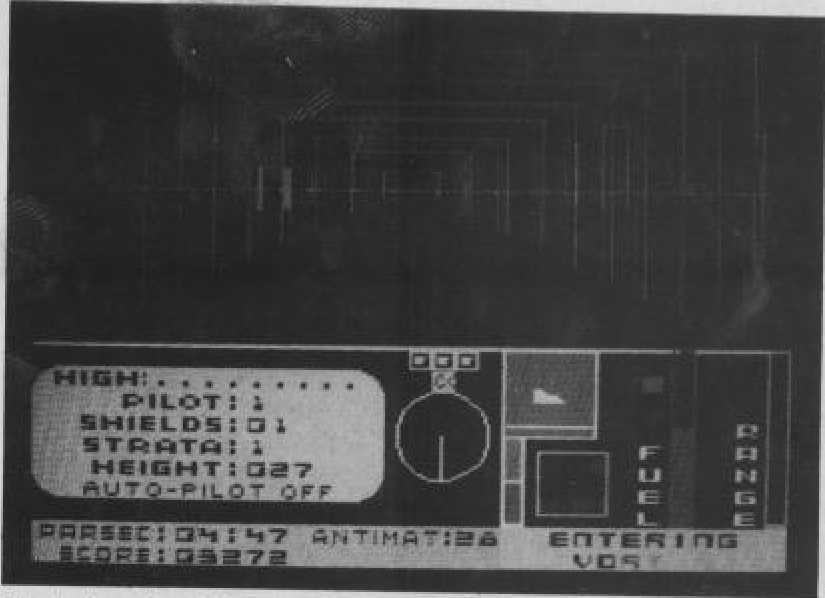
Producer: **C.R.L.**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **basic and machine code routines**
Author: **Richard Taylor**

Quite a lot of software houses recently have been vying with each other to secure the rights to well known TV series to produce computer game versions. This is C.R.L's bid for top viewing figures, an adaption of Gerry Anderson and Chris Burr's series *Terrahawks*.

In some respects, although not visually, *Terrahawks* resembles their earlier *Omega Run* – a 3D mission to fly a craft to a certain designated spot using a range finer and compass bearing. Its author, Richard Taylor, has previously produced the utility programs *Hi-Res* for the ZX81 and *Fifth* for the Spectrum. Chris Burr of Anderson Burr Pictures has said that *Terrahawks* is uncannily similar to the opening sequence of the TV program and that the game represents a masterpiece of programming creativity.

In fact its 3D vector graphics do work well, but are nowhere near as fast as some existing games and not a patch for speed on Design Design's *Dark Star*.

Your mission is to fly across a landscape dotted with large tower blocks called Crystal Towers and find the entrance to the Time Vortex which will lead you onto the next 'stratum' of the game. You start off flying at 199 feet. To gain entrance to the vortex, your height must be not more than 40 feet, preferably about 30 feet. There is an intro sequence to each game which shows the effect of your craft being pulled into a black hole. The game takes place within the confines of the black



Entering the vortex at 27 feet after a long haul over the crystal towers.

hole, and the object is to succeed in getting through the various strata to escape at the other end.

The screen is divided into two, the top half being a view through the front shield of your craft. Here you can see a dotted line representing the horizon, and the wire frame 3D tower blocks which appear and move towards you. Controlling the direction and height of your craft alters the perspective view you see of the towers. It is possible to fly upside down if you really feel like it. The higher you fly the more fuel you use up but the lower levels mean dodging more towers or having to shoot more of them down with your limited supply of 'antimat' bolts. Towers hit by these are knocked down in height by increments.

Below the viewscreen is the instrument panel. This includes a status board with lives, shields (you start with 5, after that a collision with a tower will mean crashing), level you have reached and an altimeter. Next to the status board is a compass, which is used for fine adjustments to direction during the approach to the vortex entrance. The right hand board contains an attitude gauge, fuel gauge, range finder and a close range scanner. The range finder uses a bar which decreases with distance to vortex, and above it is a light which is red when off course and green when on course for the vortex. When the vortex is a short distance away, it appears as a dot on the scanner, and by using that and the compass you should be able to line up and fly into it.

Entering the vortex, which is a long line of rectangles, the game freezes, informs you of your status and then lets you continue. When approaching and leaving the vortex, you must be careful not to impact with its sides or top. The next stratum up contains more towers, and more high ones. The other difficulty is that your fuel and antimat bullets are not replenished so you must complete your task with those in hand.

CRITICISM

● 'A fairly fast moving wire frame graphics game which is very playable. Unfortunately the instrument panel at the bottom of the screen is pretty incomprehensible and I had a lot of trouble making my craft fly the way I wanted. The 3D effect is as good as most wire

A nightmare forest of 3D crystal towers greets you in Terrahawks.



frame graphics are, but they tend to lose their 3D when you get near to the ground. The vortex is very hard to find and when you do, it's almost impossible to enter as it is so near to the ground.'

● *'This is not a terribly fast game – but it's not all that slow either. What makes it difficult are all the towers constantly looming up. The colour has been used quite well and the sound too. Line graphics don't tend to work very well when close up and at times you are confronted with a forest of vertical lines without a clue as to what is what, but these are quite good in the distance. I wouldn't call the 3D effect superb, but effective enough to create a sense of depth. i like the 'black hole' effect at the start of the game. This is one of the best games from C.R.L. which holds enough challenge to be playable.'*

● *'Terrahawks* is difficult, which will probably mean it appealing to lots of people, although it isn't particularly fast and the trip to the vortex takes some minutes. It seems a pity that the so called 'mathematical calculations' referred to in a press release i saw have failed to take account of the fact that objects moving towards you appear to travel faster the nearer they get, these actually slow right down. Still, the 3D works well until you are low, after which it is more a matter of luck than judgement. Successfully entering the vortex is quite thrilling, however, especially after the battle to find the damned thing! After playing *Terrahawks* for three or four hours, I came to the conclusion that it had grown on me, and the reasons for playing another game were largely based on the judgement needed to conserve fuel and bullets at the right moments to make successive levels possible.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/Q up/down, 9/0 left/right, ENTER to fire or cursors
Joystick: AGF, Protek, ZX 2, Kempston
Keyboard play: both options are rather awkward and key response is quite slow
Use of colour: good, wire frames are in green on black
Graphics: effective 3D which tends to break down the closer objects get
Sound: good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
General rating: a playable and reasonably difficult game, a little on the pricey side perhaps.

Use of computer	71%
Graphics	74%
Playability	76%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	64%
Value for money	65%
Overall	**69%**

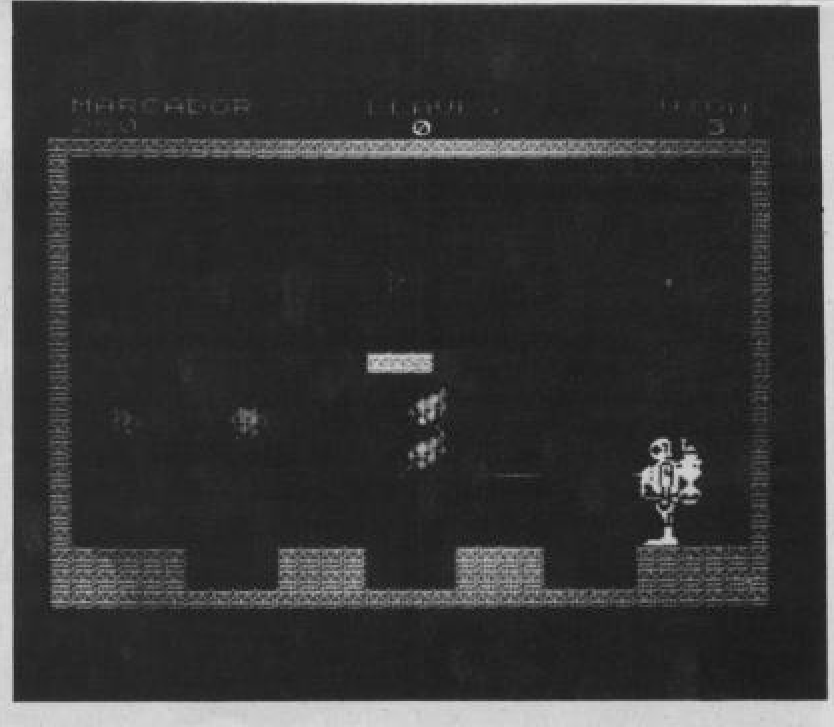
VERTIGO

Producer: **Unique**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.99**
Author: **José Manuel Guiérrez**

This new game from Unique is from a Spanish software house called **Ventamatic,** whose games Unique are marketing in Britain.
Vertigo is a large maze complex shoot em up in the manner of *Doomsday Castle, Pyramid* etc. There is a visual resemblance to *Jetpac* and *Jetman* in as much as 'you' are a space suited character with a jetpack on your back, equipped with a laser in hand and ready to deal death to the numerous Martians.

The object of the game is to get through the labyrinth of Martian Tunnels by locating the seven keys which open the treasure chest at the end. Each tunnel, or room, is guarded by Martians that fly about trying to kill you off (by contact as usual). To get out of each section of the tunnels you must destroy all the guards first. Doing this opens up the doors, either horizontally or vertically. The room may have some standing platforms and one or more trenches in the floor. These are often usefu: to duck into when threatened by a low flying alien.

Having finished a screen, it clears and returns alienless and with all doors open for you to move into the next. Before this, the map appears which shows the location of all the rooms. There are 256 of them. There are also several different types of alien with varied characteristics, and your man is one of the largest graphics of its type in any shoot em up game.



CRITICISM

● 'This is the best of the Ventamatic games I have seen, even though it doesn't have a loading screen. **Vertigo** is fun to play and the graphics are really nice, especially your man who looks like Jetman's elder brother (he's so huge)! The sound isn't too bad and it contains little tunes here and there, like the now immortalised theme tune from Star Wars when you ask for instructions. It's inevitable that this will be compared with *Pyramid* and rightly so as it bears a strong resemblance. The controls are responsive and well laid out, though when you are changing rooms they become over-responsive. All in all, a good challenging game, not exactly up to *Pyramid's* high standard, but certainly worth considering.'

● *'What first struck me about this game is the size of 'you' – 'you're' enormous! But well detailed and you move exceptionally fast. Aliens are varied, colourful and come in hordes. You don't stand a chance with that many because for a start off you are an easy target being so big, and secondly you move so quickly, it's difficult to line up a shot. It's unusual to have a map which shows you where the keys are and where you can gain extra lives. An* **L** *in a room indicates an extra life if you can reach it in time. On screen these appear as hearts. The map also adds a maze game element because you have to find the best route to get the keys and then reach the treasure at the end. I think the man moves about much too quickly and totally spoils the playability of the game, and zapping aliens tends to get a bit boring.'*

● **Vertigo** has very fine graphics which are well coloured and move very smoothly, as do 'you'. But your man is difficult to control as the responsiveness to keyboard or joystick is fast and over violent. Added to this is your size which makes it hard to avoid aliens. Otherwise the game provides a lot of scope for wholesale destruction with some strategy element thrown in with the massive maze of locations.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: alternate keys bottom row left/right, 2nd row thrust, 3rd row to fire
Joystick: Kempston, AGF, Protek
Keyboard play: very responsive, at times over-responsive
Use of colour: good
Graphics: smooth, fast and detailed
Sound: good tunes, not continuous sound but well used
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 3
Screens: plenty of precedents, but generally well implemented
Originality: well worth considering, generally above average

Use of computer	73%
Graphics	71%
Playability	69%
Getting started	77%
Addictive qualities	62%
Value for money	65%
Overall	**69%**

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This classic arcade game, originally developed by Jeff 'Awesome' Minter of Llamasoft, features 1 and 2 player options, spitting Llamas, Cyborg Arachnid Mutants, Disgusting Weeviloids, 99 levels of play. Joystick recommended. Supports Spectrum ZX Interface 2 and Kempston joysticks.

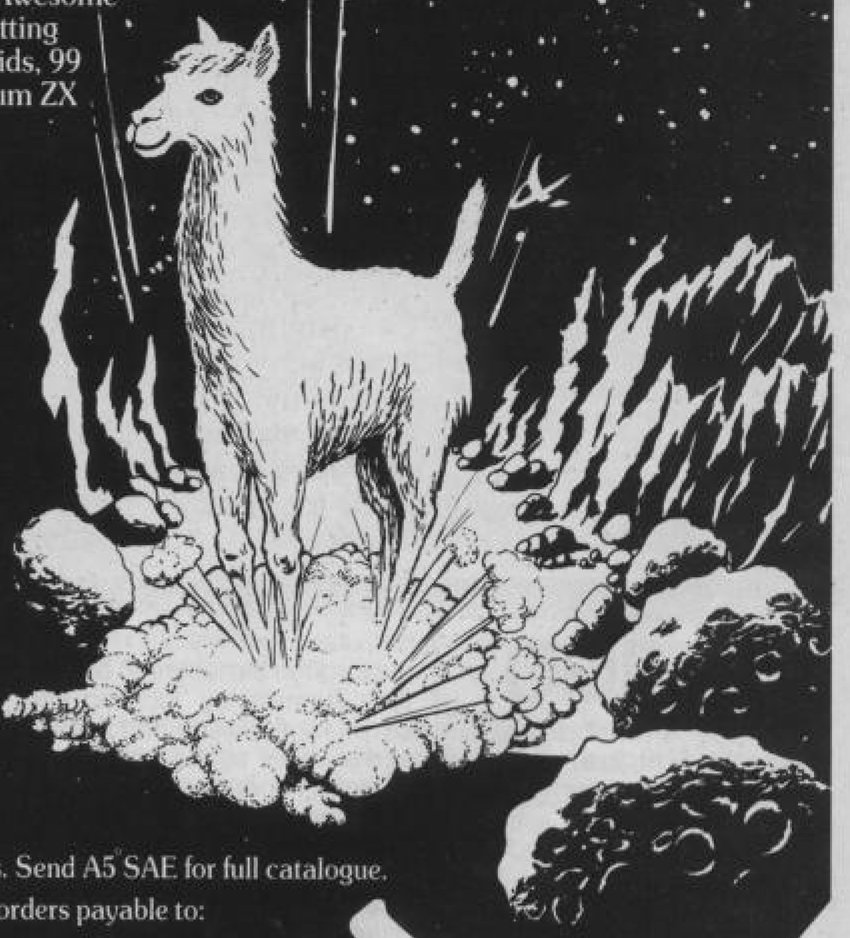
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Game originally developed by Jeff 'Awesome' Minter of Llamasoft. Joystick recommended. Supports Kempston and AGF joystick interfaces.

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WIN AN ELITE DAY OUT WITH THE PROGRAMMERS OF

KOKOTONI WILF



A



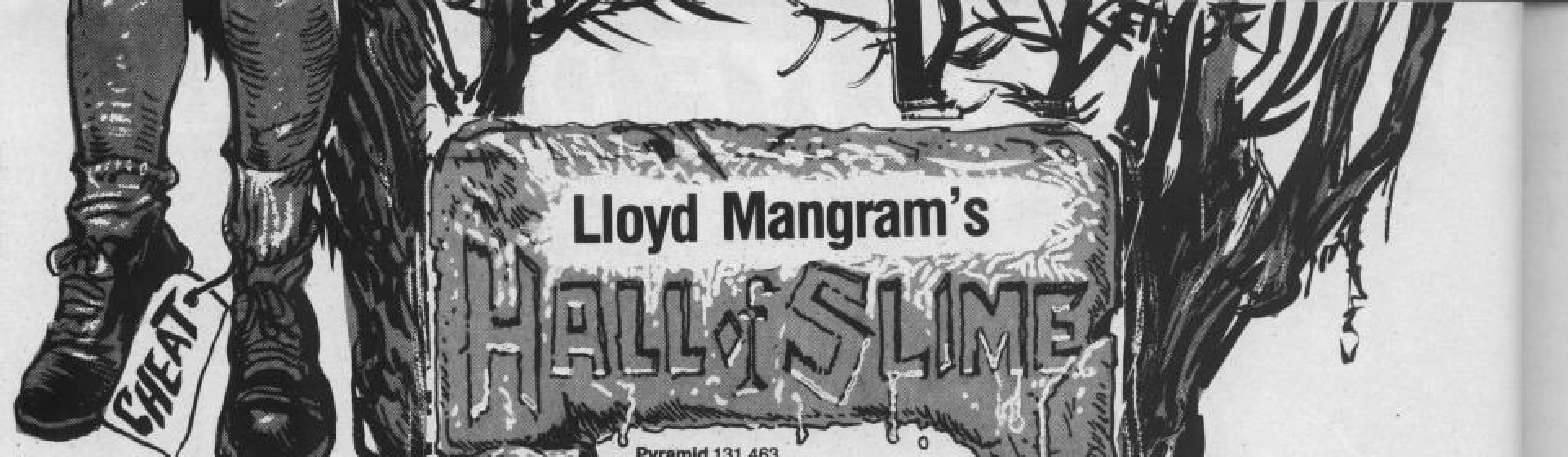
B



To the winner of this competition, software house Elite are offering a special day out which includes lunch with the programmer of their exciting new arcade game KOKOTONI WILF. After lunch the winner will be taken round Elite's offices, see where the games are designed and programmed, and will be able to see a special version of KOKOTONI WILF being prepared. Some alterations will be made to the existing game before their very eyes and the new program will incorporate the winner's name within the game to make a personal and unique copy for the winner to take away with them.

All you have to do is examine the two seemingly identical drawings taken from the game's cover and spot the 12 differences between picture A and picture B. Circle the differences on picture B, remember to fill in your name and address, and send the form back to us at: ELITE COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB to arrive no later than first post 25 October. The first correct entry drawn from the bag will win.

Name ....
Address ....
....
Postcode ....



Lloyd Mangram's HALL of SLIME

Full Throttle:
Donnington 1st, 4.56 (ahead of 2nd place)
San Marino 1st, 12.30
Jarama 1st, 20.01
Paul Richard 1st, 8.18
Nurburgring 1st, 3.36
Misano 1st, 13.09
Silverstone 1st, 25.01
Spa Francochamps 1st, 2.44
Rijeka 1st, 3.49
Anderstopr 1st, 6.50
Sean 'Biker' Cleveland, Alton Hants

Sean claims all these times are true!
LM

Sabre Wulf 93,260, completed at 60%
M. Edwards, Wembley, Middx

Sabre Wulf 123,010 and 80%
Atic Atac 27,275 and 73%
Jetpac 48,720
Chuckie Egg 107,320 on L31
Timegate 9,300
Pogo 49,750
Richard Coakes, Parson Cross, Sheffield

Chequered Flag:
Brand Hatch 1.16.06
Monaco 1.58.10
Osterreichring 1.17.02
Psion Park 1.37.90
Monza 1.07.76
Micro Drive 0.57.56
Paul Richard 1.23.40
Silverstone 1.10.06
Cambridge Ring 0.56.06
Deathchase 261,707
Wild West Hero 81,000
Cavelon 55,000 on L4
Meteor Storm 314,930
Pogo 38,000
David Lilley, Bognor Regis, W. Sussex

Pssst 82,155
Ian Ingram, Small Heath, Birmingham

Deathchase 143,325
Ant Attack 48,000
Starship Enterprise – Admiral
Dictator 147
Millionaire £126,000, Executive
C. Theodosiou, Harringay, London

Chuckie Egg 1,760,000 on L96
Bernard Murphy, Halifax, W. Yorks

Bernard, you must have been at it all your life!
LM

Pyramid 131,463
Deathchase 182,180 on L7 (3rd time)
Sabre Wulf 82,265 and 60%
Atic Atac best time 6.46, lowest 49%
Zzoom 137,270, 14th attack wave, saved 219 refugees
Sabre Wulf 344,735 at 100%
David Clark (14), Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland

Arcadia – 100 sheets and on
Halls of the Things 1803 (surely a world record)!
Howard Williams, Wickenby, Lincs.

Moon Alert 451,320
Sabre Wulf 176,000
Deathchase 180,790
Robin Candy, Ludlow, Shropshire

TLL 161,467 (10 sheets 5 times
Lawrence Reeves, Newhaven, Sussex

Sabre Wulf 236,185 at 100%
Douglas Hudson, Rugby, Warwicks.

Fred 26,400 on L3
Zzoom 143,490 on L14, 227 refugees
Matthew Dixon, Stockport, Cheshire

Pogo 167,430
Pssst 62,900
Sabre Wulf 169,250 at 100%
Deathchase 144,280 on L25
Mr. Wimpy 128,500
Exterminator 384,600 L42
TLL 15,380
Kosmic Kanga – sheet 9
Blade Alley 56,130 – Admiral
Richard White (16), Haxby, York

Atic Atac 5 min 23 sec at 99%
Sabre Wulf 109,535 at 95%
Full Throttle Silverstone 5th
Moon Alert 13,410
I find the 19 seconds for Bugaboo by S.C. Fryer very hard to swallow. My best is 2.10
The Manic Moron (Michael) Williams (14), Guisborough, Cleveland

Pssst 164,955
Nicholas Ball (9), Abingdon, Oxon

Sabre Wulf 400,145 at 98%
F.E. Mitchess, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear

Antics 40,230 – rank 11
Ronnie Young, Central region, Scotland

Doomsday Castle 112,926 (JIKIQYNZCGNP)
Nigel Benson (14), Swansea

Fred 209,100
Neil Hardiman
Timegate 13,900
Mark Humphries, both of Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos.

Penetrator 149,210 on L55
James Drury, Bristol

Sabre Wulf 115,120 at 71%
Jet Set Willy, London N8
Oh yeah!
LM

Tribble Trubble 32,710
Joe Guerrero, Tile Kiln Estate, Chelmsford, Essex

Joe wants a POKE for Silversoft's Exterminator – any takers
LM

Freez' Bees 45,320
Martin Thomson, Winsford, Cheshire

Jack & the Beanstals – all screens cleared and Beanstalk chopped down in 58 seconds
John Harris (13), Leicester

Ant Attack 43,190 (10 victims)
Chuckie Egg 119,500 on L16
Lunar Jetman 81,698 on L9
Pogo 46,590
Pedro 31,090 (116th screen)
Blade Alley 25,840
Pyramid 62,602
Ugh 13,175
Night Gunner 25,695 on M22
(Hall of Slime entry parted company with address! Sorry, but if you recognise your scores and write in, we'll print name and address next time round)
LM

Defenda 83,750 wave 6/7
Pogo 106,650 on L14
Moon Alert 23,650 on letter O
Sabre Wulf 133,650 at 100%
Andrew Sanders (15), Olton, Solihull, W. Midlands

Chuckie Egg 2,011,770 on L 108 (Did you know that the score and level indicators reset to zero after 1,000,000)?
Mick Tilson, Dagenham, Essex

Penetrator 165,940
3D Combat Zone 34,000
Zzoom 308,930 (365 refugees saved)
Missile Defence 12,900
Ant Attack 44,863
Pool (CDS) 1.010
Wild West Hero 68,625
Cyber Rats 262,549
Starblitz 67,750
TLL 34,109
Blade Alley 26,540 (Lieutenant)
S. Bufton, Harpenden, Herts.

Thanks for all your entries. So many coming in now, it's not possible to print them all. To be fair, I print them up as they emerge from the ooze. Those who miss out are being saved up for a bumper Valley of Slime special in the Christmas Special! If anyone cares to send in a photograph (Mug shots preferred) of themselves we may even print it – not that it counts as proof of the score, but at least other readers will know who to hate. Good scoring – keep em coming along.
LM



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- * Compatible with ALL Spectrum software.
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Protocol 4 is a completely self-contained joystick interface. It takes all sticks, including Quickshot II with 'rapid fire', or trackballs, and allows them to work with all games.

Because it is fully programmable you can customise game control to your own requirements i.e. put the 'pause—game' facility onto an unused direction of the joystick for real armchair control. Likewise you can disable any joystick functions that you find annoying or problematical.

The Protocol four utilizes hardware programmed technology to achieve replication of any key on the keyboard.

This is implemented by a unique system of 'Custom Cards'. They simply clip in immediately configuring the interface to replicate any keys.

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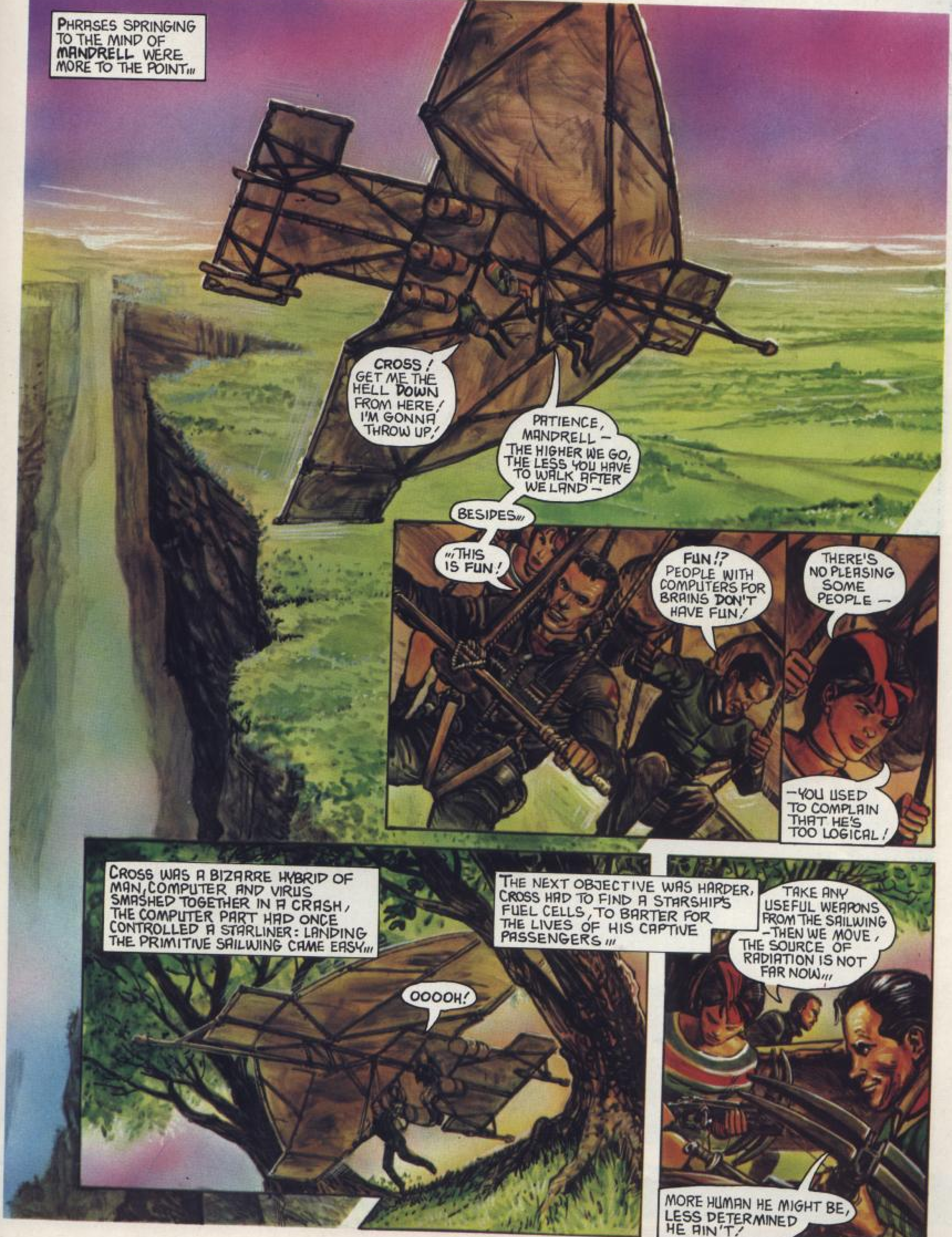
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	Extra Pack(s) of 5 cards	3.95	
	QuickShot II Joystick	10.95	
		FINAL TOTAL	

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Update:
Under normal circumstances, hang-gliding is fun. However, riding a violent thermal over an alien canyon 20K's deep can be less than enjoyable. 'Concentrates the mind wonderfully' is the phrase that springs to mind . . . .

THE TERMINAL MAN





STORY BY KELVIN GOSNELL© DRAWN BY OLIVER FREY©


EDGE TOWARDS ME AND LINK HANDS — KEEP YOUR EYES COVERED OR I'LL BURN OUT YOUR OPTIC NERVES!!!
DON'T LET GO: KEEP MOVING, WE'RE GOING OUT THE WAY WE CAME IN!
MOVE!
HOW DID YOU WORK THAT? COME TO MENTION IT, WHAT DID YOU DO?
CALLED BIOLUMINESCENCE, THINGS LIKE EARTH JELLYFISH HAVE CELLS THAT RADIATE LIGHT TO LURE PREY—
THOSE CREATURES SAW IN THE INFRARED — SO I MUTATED MY VIRUS CELLS TO RADIATE ENOUGH INFRARED TO BLIND THEM—
WHY NOT KILL 'EM WHILE YOU COULD? THEY'RE STILL STOPPING US FROM GETTING ON!!!
DAMMIT, MANDRELL— I GOT YOU OUT OF THE HOLE DIDN'T I? I SIMPLY HAD NO SPARE ENERGY, NEEDED EVERY OUNCE TO POWER THE LIGHT!!!
BESIDES WHICH, THERE IS A LITTLE THING CALLED HUMANITY,
WE DON'T HAVE TO KILL EVERYTHING WHICH STANDS IN OUR WAY,
OH— SO IT'S BE-KIND-TO-MUTANTS WEEK, HUH? YOU TELL ME HOW WE GET THROUGH HERE THEN, LADY?
I GUIDE YOU,
?!



Next: Graveyard of the Starships...



ALCATRAZ HARRY

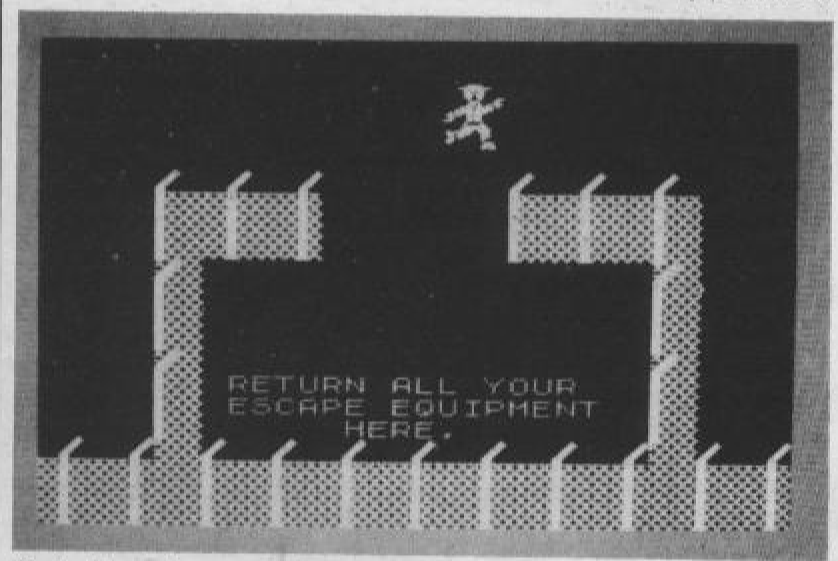
Producer: **Mastertronic**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **B. Jones**

Alcatraz is the famous old American island prison in San Francisco Bay. The cover of this new game from Mastertronic – a 'unique blend of arcade, strategy and adventure' – has a cover which reinforces the belief that it is an American prison break game. So it comes as rather a surprise to discover in the on-screen instructions at the start that you are in a prison camp from which you must escape with secret files that the allies need. Sounds more like the Second World War!

You start the game in a compound into which you must place 30 items of equipment. A flashing X marks the spot at the bottom centre of an 8 by 18 grid (144 squares). You collect escape equipment as you move around. At the start you are told the sector number where the secret files are to be found, once all the equipment is collected, and your present sector number is displayed whenever you want in a status report. After collecting the equipment you must make your escape via a hole in the North fence after passing through a minefield.

Besides yourself in the camp there are guards who will arrest you for loitering should return to that sector again, there are tunnels which lead to other parts of the camp and cars which can be used for driving back to compound where the equipment must be deposited.

Harry, if that's who he is, is moved about by four directional keys. Setting off from the compound, he can be moved to any other screen by touching the edge. The objects to be collected, which consist of six types, ropes, ladders, wire cutters etc, are usually found on the right of the screen while a blockhouse or guardhouse is on the left. The camp perimeter squares are indicated by the fencing. If Harry goes into a tunnel there is a screen showing a diagrammatic cross section of the ground with the tunnel burrowing under the imagined wall of the two connecting sectors. Should he escape with all the equipment, the minefield part of the game takes the form of *Mined-Out* in reverse, you are shown the positions of the mines very briefly and then have to work your way across. Help is given by the border colours which warn of the proximity of one, two or three mines a step away.



Alcatraz Harry – the man with the broken legs – a latter day Buster Keaton

CRITICISM

● 'The graphics in this game are of a reasonable size but are not terribly well animated (in fact your man looks like he's had one over the limit)! Overall the game is not exactly a great game but on the other hand for what it is, it does represent value for money at £1.99.'

● *'Although you are allowed to see the grid with the 144 sectors in the instructions, and are led to believe that this info will be repeated if you press S for status, it isn't. You are merely told which sector number you are in – no indication as to how the sectors are numbered. That means that if you are going to take the game seriously you must map your moves, especially if you don't want to run into a guard for the second time and get arrested. The real point is whether you're going to take the game seriously! To my mind it is good value for a young child playing with a parent, but for anyone seriously considering an adventure with arcade overtones, I wouldn't bother. Although the guards look authentically like World War I French soldiers (!?), Harry looks like Mr. Midshipman Easy dancing a hornpipe.'*

● 'Where does the 'unique blend of arcade, strategy and adventure' description fit into this game? A very primitive idea and program. You (well your legs) move in a very odd fashion, almost as though they have been broken. This game is very still in the sense that nothing seems to move or happen. Keyboard layout is good but response time is slow. Colour, sound and graphics have been poorly used. Still not really worth the cheap price.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, S for status
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: very slow
Use of colour: below average
Graphics: large and ungainly
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 4
General rating: below average to poor in execution and content.

Use of computer	45%
Graphics	41%
Playability	31%
Getting started	58%
Addictive qualities	31%
Value for money	49%
Overall	**43%**

RED ATTACK

Producer: **Unique**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: £5.99
Language: **machine code**

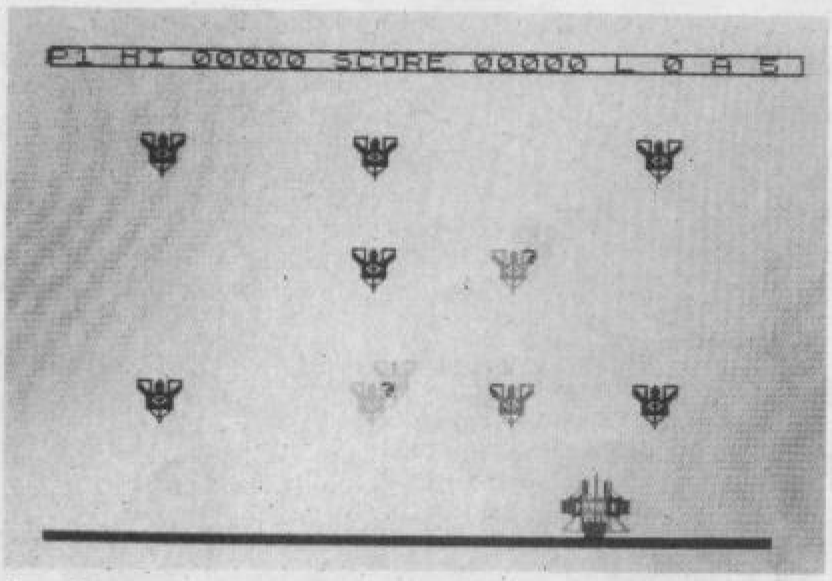


Red Attack is a 'Galaxovariant' shoot em up with 72 attack waves, six waves to a level with 9 different types of alien. As usual you laser base can move left and right at the base of the screen but, like *Arcadia*, you are allowed to move up the screen, in this case, right to the top. Your ship falls back under the force of gravity quite rapidly. The aliens wrap around vertically and horizontally.

There are two speeds for laser fire and two playing speeds selectable from the front-end menu, and it is possible to enter any stage between levels 1 and 5 with consequent forfeiture of lives. What makes *Red Attack* unusual is that the computer will keep a high score table going for up to 9 players.

CRITICISM

● 'A fairly boring shoot em up, blast the aliens and jump over them as they come towards you. There are 72 attack waves (which I got nowhere near to finishing). I found this one boring and uninteresting



A post-Galaxo-variant – Red Attack boasts a strong laser.

with jerky graphics and no variation in the game itself.'

● *'Not much to say about this shoot em up. It soon gets very monotonous. Games from this time last year surpass this one! The graphics are large and smooth-ish but are all very similar in design and motion. It's generally not challenging enough and hardly lives up to the name Unique.'*

● 'I really think it must be a mistake to come out with such a simple shoot em up game like *Red Attack* these days. 'Galaxian' style shoot em up have had their day really, and this is a very simple one. Half the atmosphere is lost at the start by playing on a white screen, which makes some of the alien craft, when yellow or pale blue, quite hard to see well. The laser effect is fine, and overall movement versus attack speed seems well balanced, but I honestly couldn't recommend this to anyone.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: user-definable, left/right/up and fire needed
Joystick: almost any via UDK
Keyboard play: responsive enough for the game
Use of colour: poor really, pastel colours on white
Graphics: large sized, but somewhat unimaginative, no animation and jerky, rather predictable attack movement
Sound: very good
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 5 per stage
Features: fpr between 1 and 9 players if desired
General rating: fair to below average and not very good value for money by today's standard.

Use of computer	55%
Graphics	50%
Playability	40%
Getting started	65%
Addictive qualities	35%
Value for money	48%
Overall	49%



FRANK N. STEIN

Producer: **P.S.S.**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£5.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Colin Stewart**

Frank N. Stein is a nuts and bolts game, a question of placing the bits in the right place in the right order. You play the part of Frank himself, a cute little white scientific personage (he's presumably as white as a sheet having seen a ghost). In his mansion, with its various rooms, seven bits of the monster he's busy creating are scattered about, namely the head, shoulders, arms and legs. The object is to walk about collecting them in the right order so that the monster is slowly built up again.

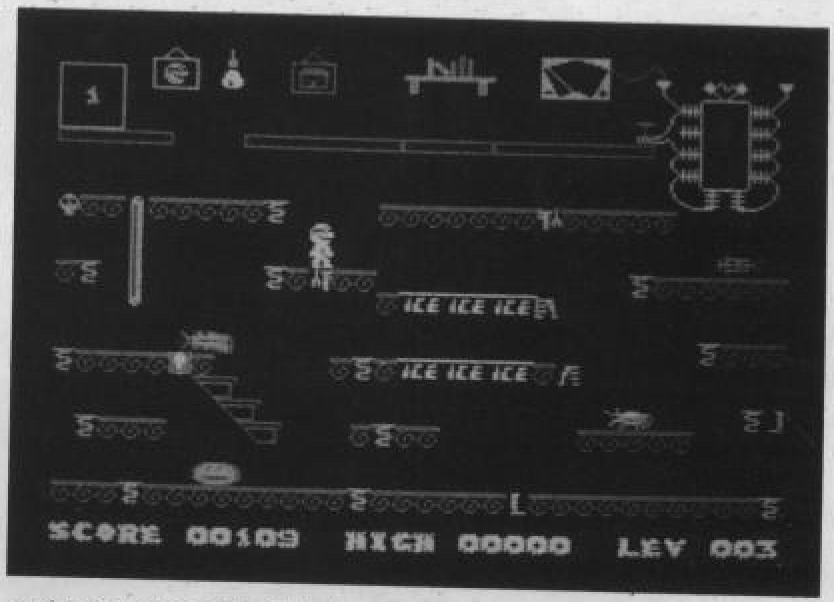
Frank's mansion has rooms with several platforms in them connected by staircases and firemen's poles. Oddly, he cannot go upwards though, except by careful and strategic use of the numerous coiled springs – well, scientists tend to cultivate a batty lifestyle.

Additionally, there are a number of hazards sloping up and down the platforms which have a nasty habit of killing poor old Frank off if he's not careful. On top of that, being a proficient electrician, there are some very poor connections lying about which give hem a quick thrill if he treads on one.

The first screen is relatively simple in layout, but progressive screens become increasingly difficult to negotiate. In between them comes a second type of screen which is reminiscent of a 'Kong' game. Again there are many platforms with coiled springs and hazards. The object is to realch the top and, as with all the screens, press the plunger to deactivate the monster. One extra problem with this otherwise reasonably simple arrangement is that the monster keeps dropping white balls which fall to the bottom before rolling off to the right. These, if they hit a hazard, wait for it to pass, adding an element of randomness to the timing.

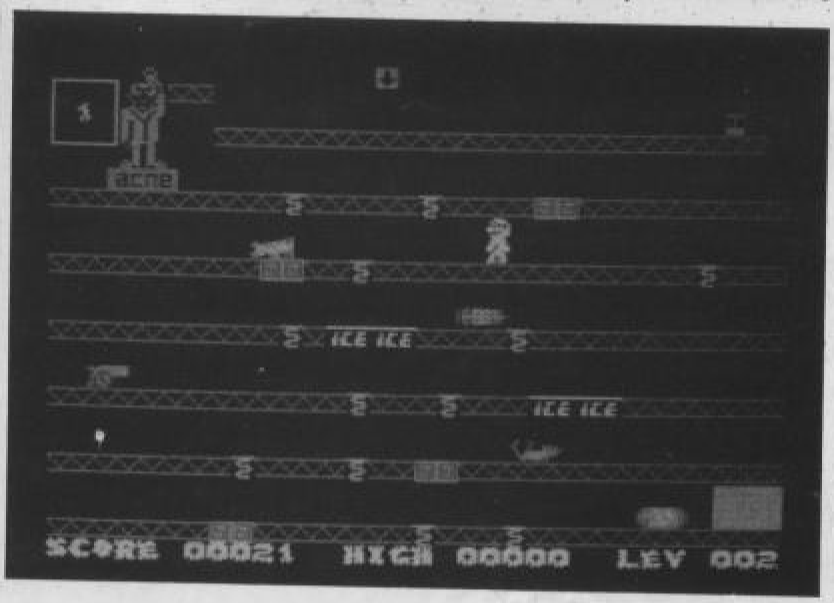






CRITICISM

● 'This game starts out as being above average, but as it is played you soon become more interested. It has lots of little additions (like ice patches) that make it better. After a while it soon becomes a good game. A fair amount of planning is required so that the springs are used to full advantage. The graphics, although small, are well animated. Overall, a good game.'



● *'What struck me at first about this game was the cheerful and colourful graphics. Play wasn't too difficult – just right. The monster must be assembled in a logical order which is easier said than done, while avoiding hazards. This is definitely among the best of platform games for some time. Addictive and great fun to play.'*

● 'An excellent platform game which has neatly detailed and animated graphics, even though the sound leaves a little to be desired. The game itself is set in a creepy old house indicated by pictures hanging on the walls, lightbulbs, bookshelves and staircases. I like the idea of the 'activate' control instead of a jump button, which means you can do a lot more with less keys. The time limit on the assembling screens adds to the fun, and the ice patches are a nice touch, and a hazardous one at that. Very addictive and fun to play. I'm going to get this one!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left/right, SPACE to 'activate'
Joystick: Kempston, ZX 2, Protek, AGF
Keyboard play: very good layout and responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: smooth, well animated and characterful
Sound: average, could have been more for effect, but nice noises
Skill levels: progressive difficulty
Lives: 3
Screens: 50
General rating: a good, novel platform game that becomes very addictive in play.

Use of computer	79%
Graphics	80%
Playability	82%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	78%
Overall	80%

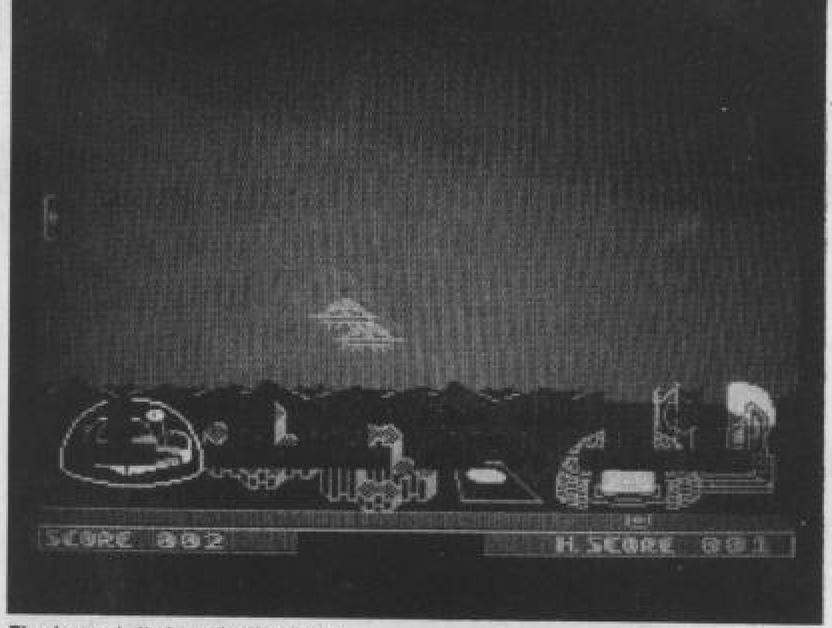
WRECKAGE

Producer: **Unique**
Memory required: **16K**
Retail price: **£5.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Oscar Domingo**

Another Spanish Ventamatic game from Unique. You are in control of a laser base protecting a city from the ravages of alien flying saucers that resemble angry jellyfish. They are dropping bombs all over the place, blowing craters in the ground, smashing up the roads, blasting the houses to bits and crumbling the domes – an all this under a hot blue summer sky.

Your laser base can be moved left and right for firing, while a vertical sight to the left of the screen affects the trajectory of the shot (which means they must be bullets or shells you're firing – don't lasers travel instraight lines)?

The more aliens you shoot away, the more they appear. When your city is destroyed the ground radiates lethally and the game is finished.



The doomed city from the Wreckage.

CRITICISM

● 'This new game from the Spanish company is not their best. The loading screen is quite neat but that's about all. It has shades of *Psytron* (recognisable to the eyes of a trained CRASH reviewer!) in the respect that you have to defend a city with a laser cannon. But it's nowhere near as graphically impressive as *Psytron*. The keyboard controls are quite good but this is marred by the fact that the fire button is in such an akward position. The graphics are quite neat and while they serve their purpose, that is all they do – no hidden extras; and the sound is quite boring, especially with the continuous, wearing buzz when you've finished a game that goes on until you start a new one. This is a very simple game and it begins to get tedious after a while. It may well appeal to younger children though.'

● 'Wreckage *is rather too simple in content to warrant more than a few moments playing, which is a pity for the very bright and rather original graphics. I found keyboard control irritating as you cannot fire and move at the same time, not even the sights can be moved left and up at the same time. This gives the aliens a sizeable advantage. Again, it's one of those games that would have been great a year ago but looks, or rather feels, outdated now.'*

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right and 0 to fire
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive but only single control, awkward fire position
Use of colóur: very good
Graphics: neat and detailed with a limited 3D effect; everything except the alien craft moves very smoothly and fast, the aliens are rather jerky
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 1
Lives: 1
General rating: fair to average, a bit low in content.

Use of computer	58%
Graphics	70%
Playability	54%
Getting started	60%
Addictive qualities	54%
Value for money	50%
Overall	**58%**



16/48 – The magazine on tape

Existing technology is often far harder to overturn than Utopia-mongers would like us to think. For many years the early railway carriages continued to resemble the old stage coach carriages of the roads, American philosopher Marshal McLuhan predicted the end of books – in a book. With the advent of teletext, one could be forgiven for thinking that the Radio and TV Times might have had their day – apparently not yet. Equally, the advent of the home computer has offered obvious opportunities for the production of computer magazines presented as software. Is it the end of the traditional paper magazine?

Chris Passey takes a brief look at *16/48 magazine* – the July and August issues (Nos. 9 and 10).

16/48 is a magazine on tape hence, due to its medium, it has certain advantages over the paper magazine and disadvantages. The fact that it costs £2.99 makes it the most expensive computer mag! Is it worth this? Read on . . .

Each issue starts off with a quick look at the month's offerings (helpfully, this is duplicated on the cassette inlay card with space for writing tape counter readings). The contents tend to consist of the following: a couple of games (arcade etc.) editorial and letters, the odd educational program, an adventure plus adventure tips, machine code routines, brief reviews and a competition.

Don't expect the games to be of CRASH SMASH standard, but some are quite commendable. For example, *Elevator* in issue 9 is rather original and challenging with nice graphics. The editorial does not cover anywhere near as much as the average paper magazine. The educational games/utilities such as memory games using languages, and lens/ray calculations are fairly decent. Not being much of an adventurer I can only say that the adventure, *The Long Way Home*, is fairly typical but the 48K version has some excellent graphics. What makes *16/48's* adventure interesting is that it is a serial, a natural idea for a magazine like this. The adventure tips are a bit long winded to get at, but quite useful.

The mnachine code routines interested me, some are useful such as the screen magnifier, which I have tried out since. There is also a very good microdrive feature (but I suspect the writers think everyone has microdrive).

But now onto the subject of reviews. I found these to be very shallow. They basically say what the object of a game is with a very brief sort of opinion. There appear to be only about two per issue, but the screen pictures are the best I've ever seen – they are screen pictures!

I found that on each tape there were programs that interested me and there were those that did not. This meant that to get to a required bit I had to guess where it was (no tape counter). This can become a major drawback – access. It's easy to have a quick flick through a paper magazine over breakfast, but *16/48* has to be loaded. Therefore it's not like a real magazine that you can pick up and read at leisure. On the other hand because it is loaded you don't have to type in listings (if anyone still does)!

It's unlikely that you will be interested by every program in each issue of *16/48*, so it's really up to the individual to decide whether it's worth the tag of £2.99 (I mean – can you see hardened arcaders playing *Yahtzee*)? For up to date news/views or reviews the paper mag is still 'tops'; but if you want a varied package as mentioned here, then it may well be of interest to you (and it'll be fun to see how well this review holds up in ten years time)!

16/48 magazine is published by 16/48 Magazine Ltd., Chiswick, London W4, monthly from all good news retail outlets, price £2.99.


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Soft we're not

Kokotoni Wilf

'Kokotoni Wilf is an arcade adventure program whose undisguised intention is to steal the title of "best arcade adventure program bar non" from Jet Set Willy. Kokotoni Wilf must recover all of the pieces of the legendary Dragon Amulet (which has been scattered through time) for his master the great magician 'Ulrich'. Throughout the quest Wilf comes up against many dangers from huge Prehistoric Dinosaurs to hostile alien Robots, but the reward for recovering all of the pieces warrants the risk. The 48K program features a number of major advances over Jet Set Willy. The games' designer, ELITE, stresses that each of the games 60 plus screens settings is genuinely high resolution as opposed to psuedo high-res and doesn't require a title to explain what you're looking at. The Sprite characters are of cartoon quality and exhibit their own unique personalities. Impressive claims. Jet Set Willy fans will no doubt feel both sceptical and intrigued. Now they can find out for themselves!

Available September 15th for –

Spectrum 48K	@ £5.95 (Cass.)
Commodore 64	@ £6.95 (Cass.)
....	@ £8.95 (Disc)

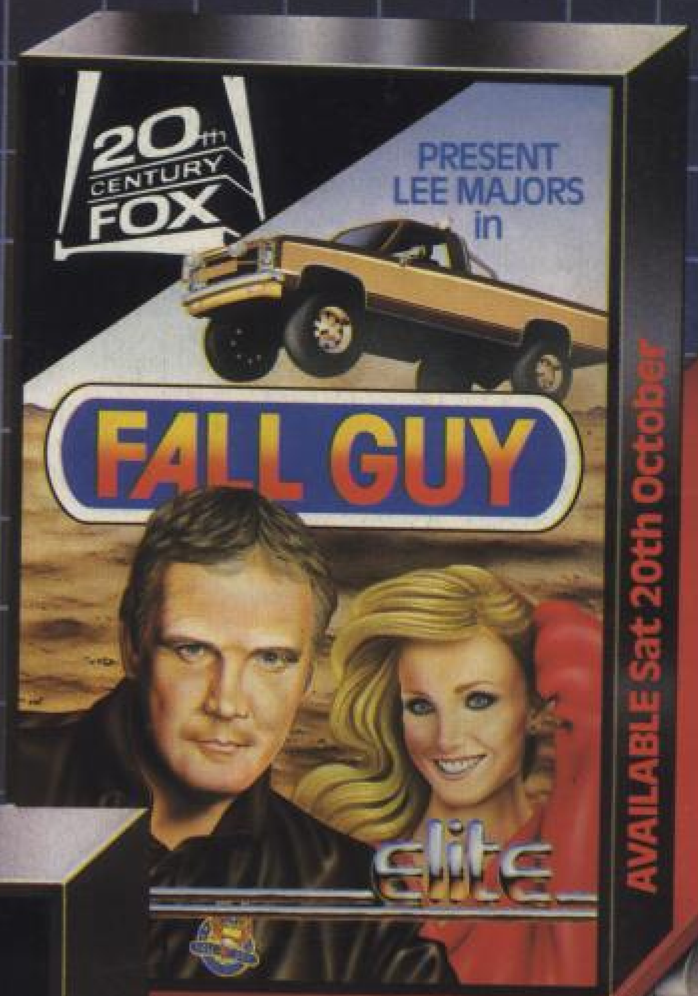
The Fall Guy

'Colt Seavers is a top Hollywood stuntman who uses the extraordinary skills he displays before the camera when moonlighting as a modern Bounty Hunter, who apprehends and brings in Bail Bond jumpers. Colt is ably assisted by his would-be manager Howie, his beautiful stunt girl protege, Jody, and Terri the lady from the Bail Bond Company, who hires Colt when he's not before the cameras.

The cast of characters is:

Colt Savers	LEE MAJORS
Jody Banks	HEATHER THOMAS
Howie Munson	DOUG BARR
Terri Micheals	MARKIE POST

Available October 20th



AVAILABLE Sat 20th October



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48K Spectrum and Commodore 64

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